FREE 25-TRACK ALBUM DOWNLOAD FROM ROCKET RECORDINGS

PROG

ASTOUNDING SOUNDS
AMAZING MUSIC

KEITH EMERSON

His 30 greatest works as chosen by Rick Wakeman, Ian Anderson, Derek Shulman, Geoff Downes, Mark Kelly and more...

PLUS

RICHARD WRIGHT
EXPLORING THE SOLO WORK OF PINK FLOYD'S VERY QUIET MAN

TREVOR RABIN
"THE BAD BLOOD BETWEEN TONY KAYE AND TREVOR HORN WAS THERE FROM THE START"

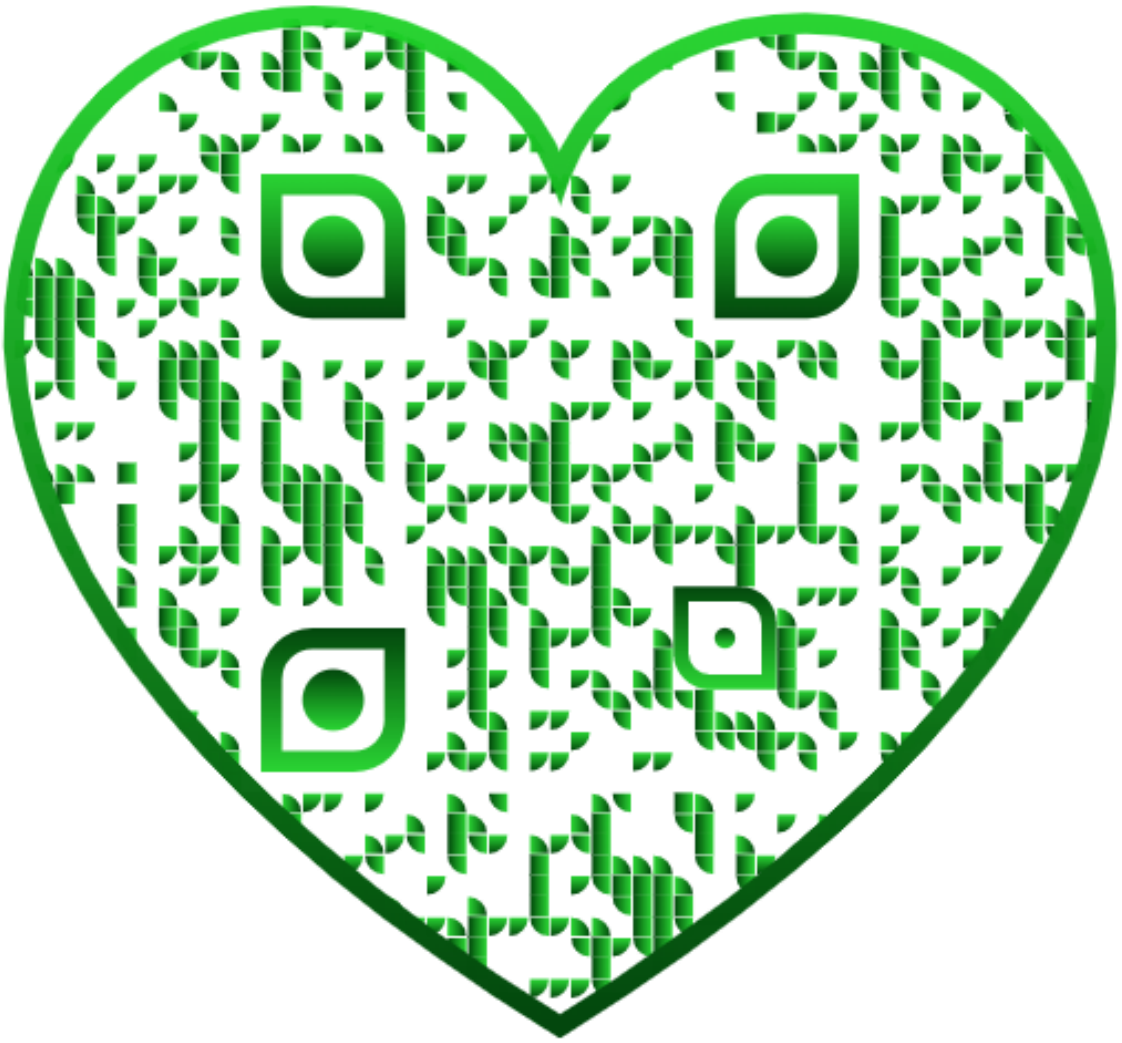
JOHN WETTON
PROG GOES BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE RECENT TRIBUTE CONCERT

STEVEN WILSON
"FOR THE FIRST TIME IT FEELS LIKE I'M AT THE FOREFRONT OF SOMETHING THAT'S CHANGING"

+

YES
NEAL MORSE
THE FLOWER KINGS
GALAHAD
OZRIC TENTACLES
BIG BIG TRAIN
AYREON

FUTURE



GREG LAKE MAGICAL

A celebration of the solo career of one of Britain's most revered singer-songwriters

Featuring performances by Gary Moore, Toto, Clarence Clemons, Robert Fripp, Steve Howe, Geoff Downes, Keith Emerson, Cozy Powell, Carl Palmer and more.

Strictly Limited Edition Deluxe 91-track 7-CD Set

10" x 10 boxset with 64 page book featuring unseen images and interviews with many of his collaborators

Pre-order through Burning Shed and get a 10" x 10" Greg Lake Print

www.burningshed.com

SPIRIT of UNICORN MUSIC

CHERRY RED RECORDS

JOHN WETTON

† AN 8 CD BOX SET CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THIS INCREDIBLE MUSICIAN.

† ALL SIX SOLO STUDIO ALBUMS WITH BONUS TRACKS

† 2 CDS OF UNRELEASED AND RARE MATERIAL

† 68 PAGE BOOK

John Wetton was revered as a colossus of the progressive rock world. He fronted three of the most successful prog rock bands of all time as well being part of a myriad of other bands and musical projects. This box set ensures his legacy lives on by featuring re-mastered recordings of Wetton's 6 solo albums alongside 2 CDs of unreleased and rare bonus material. A 68 page book is also included, charting the musical life of this song-writing visionary.

This extensive collection is the perfect way to celebrate what was truly an extraordinary life.

Pre-order from Burning Shed and get an exclusive 10 John Wetton track download at purchase.

www.burningshed.com

Contents

ISSUE 144 20.10.23

IF IT'S IN THERE IT'S ON HERE

HANS J HOFFMANN/ULLSTEIN BILD VIA GETTY IMAGES

COVER FEATURE

"There'll be people discovering Keith's music in 100 years' time."

Keith Emerson p28

The master of the Moog: his 30 greatest works…

Contents

REGULARS

PROG PRESENTS... pg 7
Get your free 25-track Rocket Recordings downloadable sampler here.

BLOODY WELL WRITE pg 10
Missives, musings and tweets from Planet Prog.

THE INTRO pg 12
The very latest in prog news from Peter Hammill, Geddy Lee, Moon Safari, Cyan, The Omnific, Opeth, Myrkur and loads more!

Q&A pg 26
Norwegian jazz and prog guitarist Hedvig Mollestad tells us all about her latest venture, *Weejuns*.

THE PROG INTERVIEW pg 78

PRESS/HRISTO SHINDOV

Having just released his first vocal-led solo album in 34 years, Trevor Rabin looks back over his career as a solo artist, a member of Yes and beyond.

THE MUSICAL BOX pg 84
This month Steven Wilson's *The Harmony Codex* takes top billing and we review current releases from King Crimson, Yes, Edgar Broughton, Gong, Meshuggah, Christina, Tiger Moth Tales, Frank Zappa, Green Lung, Bruce Soord, It Bites, XTC, Ozric Tentacles, Goat, Earthside, Steely Dan, The Emerald Dawn, District 97, The Police, Brian Eno and loads more…

TAKE A BOW pg 102
This month we've seen gigs by Yes, Ayreon, Big Big Train and more. We've also been to A Sunday In September and ArcTanGent festivals!

MY PROG pg 114
French progger Franck Carducci on a prog life full of Genesis, Supertramp, *Grease* and the Tour de France.

FEATURES

Steven Wilson Pg 44
Steven Wilson discusses the sonic architecture of his new solo album, *The Harmony Codex*.

John Wetton Pg 48
Prog goes behind the scenes of the John Wetton: An Extraordinary Life tribute .

KEVIN NIXON

Ozric Tentacles Pg 52
Ed Wynne lifts the lid on *Lotus Unfolding* the latest from Ozric Tentacles.

Richard Wright Pg 56
With the recent reissue of Wright's solo debut, *Wet Dream*, we look at the output of Pink Floyd's quiet man.

Rocket Recordings Pg 60
Prog celebrates 25 years of the psychedelic and progressively minded independent label.

Neal Morse Pg 66
The NMB leader turns to the Bible story of Joseph and his coat of many colours for his latest rock opera.

The Flower Kings Pg 70
Roine Stolt brings us up to speed with The Flower Kings' 16th studio album, *Look At You Now*.

Galahad Pg 74
UK prog survivors Galahad are back with *The Long Goodbye*, and we find out more.

Trevor Rabin
Rio

In Stores 6th October 2023

The first solo album of vocal material in 34 years from the legendary guitarist, producer & composer. Features the lead single 'Big Mistakes'.

Available on Ltd Deluxe transp. red 2LP+Blu-ray &
Ltd CD+Blu-ray mediabook incl. bonus tracks, 5.1 surround sound & liner notes
Also available as Standard CD, Gatefold 2LP & as Digital Album.

D'VIRGILIO, MORSE & JENNINGS
SOPHOMORE

In Stores 10th November 2023

Nick D'Virgilio (Big Big Train), **Neal Morse** (Transatlantic) & **Ross Jennings** (Haken) return with their 'sophomore' album of catchy choruses, multi-layer vocal harmonies and an ever-adventurous musical palette.

Available as Ltd SleevePac CD (incl. 2 bonus tracks),
Ltd gatefold 180g transparent red 2LP & as Digital Album.

SONY MUSIC

Available from amazon.co.uk

www.insideoutmusic.com
INSIDEOUT MUSIC

academyevents by arrangement with CIRCLE SKY presents

ERIC TENTACLES GONG

FRUIT SALAD LIGHTS

NOVEMBER 2023
FRI 17th OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY
SAT 18th LONDON O_2 FORUM KENTISH TOWN + CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN
SUN 19th MANCHESTER O_2 RITZ
MON 20th SHEFFIELD O_2 ACADEMY2
TUE 21st COLCHESTER ARTS CENTRE
THU 23rd NORTHAMPTON ROADMENDERS
FRI 24th BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY
SAT 25th GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
SUN 26th BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY2
TUE 28th BRIGHTON CHALK
WED 29th NORWICH EPIC STUDIOS
THU 30th BOURNEMOUTH O_2 ACADEMY
DECEMBER 2023
FRI 1st FROME CHEESE & GRAIN
SAT 2nd LIVERPOOL O_2 ACADEMY

MARCH
14 GLASGOW BARROWLAND
16 NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY
22 NEWCASTLE O_2 CITY HALL
23 CARDIFF UTILITA ARENA
24 BRISTOL O_2 ACADEMY
28 NORTHAMPTON ROYAL AND DERNGATE
29 LEEDS O_2 ACADEMY
30 BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY
31 BOURNEMOUTH O_2 ACADEMY

The Been There Done That Tour

APRIL
04 MANCHESTER O_2 VICTORIA WAREHOUSE
06 LONDON TROXY
07 SOUTHEND CLIFFS PAVILION
11 CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE
12 SHEFFIELD O_2 ACADEMY
13 LIVERPOOL MOUNTFORD HALL
14 BRIGHTON DOME

ALTTICKETS.COM | HAPPYMONDAYSOFFICIAL.CO.UK

academyevents in association with ABBIE CARTER OF HAL CARTER ORGANISATION presents

SLADE

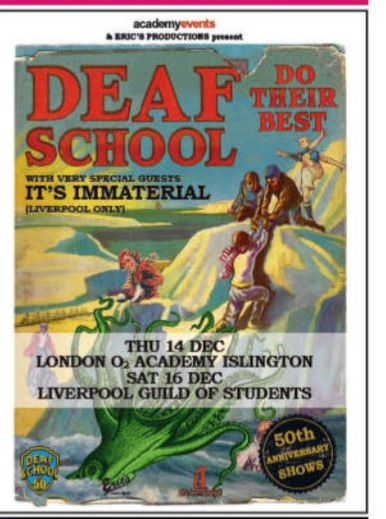
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF
CUM ON FEEL THE NOIZE
& **MERRY XMAS EVERYBODY**

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS
Sons of the Seventies

SAVETHELSLADE.COM

DECEMBER 2023
SUN 03 NEWCASTLE O_2 CITY HALL
TUE 05 GRIMSBY DOCKS ACADEMY
FRI 08 EGHAM ROYAL HOLLOWAY STUDENTS UNION
FRI 15 LEICESTER O_2 ACADEMY
SAT 16 SHEFFIELD FOUNDRY
MON 18 CARDIFF TRAMSHED
TUE 19 SOUTHAMPTON ENGINE ROOMS
THU 21 MARGATE HALL BY THE SEA, DREAMLAND
FRI 22 OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY
SAT 23 BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY2

AN ELECTRIFYING NIGHT OF BOWIE'S BIGGEST HITS
2023
FRI 17 NOV LIVERPOOL O_2 ACADEMY2
SAT 18 NOV BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY2
FRI 24 NOV SHEFFIELD O_2 ACADEMY2



THU 14 DEC
LONDON O_2 ACADEMY ISLINGTON
SAT 16 DEC
LIVERPOOL GUILD OF STUDENTS

RE GENESIS

are proud to present

"The Last Supper"

a show featuring the very best of Early Genesis

Sunday 29th October 2023

O_2 Shepherd's Bush Empire London

An Academy Events presentation

academyevents presents

THE DEFINITIVE TRIBUTE TO QUEEN

DON'T STOP QUEEN NOW

"SOUNDS JUST LIKE FREDDIE" ADAM LAMBERT QUEEN FRONTMAN
As seen on itv
"AUTHENTIC & ENTERTAINING" ★★★★★
"THEY WILL ROCK YOU!" ★★★★★

DONTSTOPQUEENNOW.COM

2023

SATURDAY 18 NOVEMBER
MANCHESTER O_2 RITZ

SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER
OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY

SATURDAY 23 DECEMBER
LEEDS O_2 ACADEMY

academyevents presents

A Tribute to Lemmy

motörheadache

PLUS SPECIAL GUESTS

THU 28th DECEMBER 2023
LONDON O_2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON
SAT 30th DECEMBER 2023
BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY3

MOTORHEADACHE.COM

academyevents BY ARRANGEMENT WITH COAST TOWN EVENTS LIMITED PRESENTS

Deeper Purple

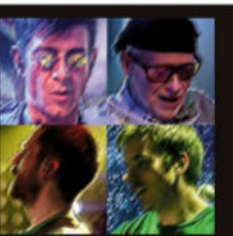
10th ANNIVERSARY TOUR '24

FRIDAY 26th APRIL
SHEFFIELD O_2 ACADEMY2
SATURDAY 27th APRIL
LEICESTER O_2 ACADEMY2
FRIDAY 3rd MAY
LONDON O_2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON
SATURDAY 4th MAY
OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY2

DEEPERPURPLE.BAND

academyevents presents

ABSOLUTION



MUSE TRIBUTE

2024

FRI 19 JAN
LONDON O_2 ACADEMY2 ISLINGTON
SAT 20 JAN
OXFORD O_2 ACADEMY2
FRI 26 JAN
LIVERPOOL O_2 ACADEMY2
SAT 27 JAN
BIRMINGHAM O_2 ACADEMY3
FRI 09 FEB
SHEFFIELD O_2 ACADEMY2
SAT 10 FEB
LEICESTER O_2 ACADEMY2

PROG PRESENTS...

Discovering

Rocket Recordings was started in the UK in 1998 by Chris Reeder and John O'Carroll (along with third member Simon Healey, who left in 2008). The exploratory label began as a hobby but has since grown so much its reverberations can be felt across the globe.

Rocket's path has been impulsive and intuitive, an iconoclastic and freewheeling force in an increasingly circumspect music world. Now in its 25th year, the forward motion of this craft remains steadfast and oblivious to all around it, the label's vision and insights intact with sights set skyward on fresh lunacy and elegant chaos anew. Get on board!

How to download your free digital MP3 sampler from Rocket Recordings

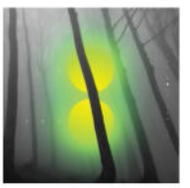
1. Visit www.bit.ly/rocket_sampler. Type it straight into your browser – do not type the URL into a search engine.
2. Download the zipped album to your computer.
3. Unzip the file and enjoy your new music!

Discover more Rocket Recordings by visiting www.rocketrecordings.com

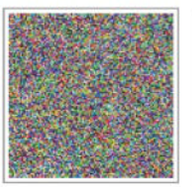
What's on your free Rocket Recordings digital album

Download the 25-track sampler from www.bit.ly/rocket_sampler

1 Goat
Let It Burn
Taken from *Let It Burn* (single)



2 The Holy Family
Hell Born Babel
Taken from *Go Zero*



3 Gnoomes
Severokamsk
Taken from *Tschak!*

4 Hills
National Drone
Taken from *Frid*

5 Land Trance
A Raft
Taken from *First Seance*

6 J Zunz
Lineal
Taken from *Del Aire*

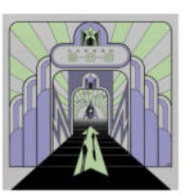
7 Moundabout
Sacred & Profane
Taken from *An Cnoc Mór*

8 Djinn
Love Divine
Taken from *Transmission*

9 Teeth Of The Sea
Liminal Kin
Taken from *Hive*

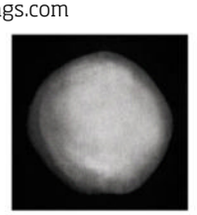
10 Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs Pigs
The Weatherman
Taken from *Land Of Sleeper*

11 Julie's Haircut
Salting Traces
Taken from *Invocation And Ritual Dance Of My Demon Twin*



12 Smote
Coal Tongue
Taken from *Launch300* (compilation)

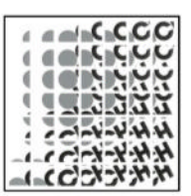
Scan here to download or follow the instructions above



13 Ved
DDTT
Taken from *DDTT EP*

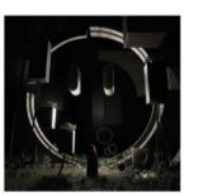
14 Alison Cotton
I Buried The Candlesticks
Taken from *The Portrait You Painted Of Me*

15 The Shits
In My Hotel Room
Taken from *You're A Mess*

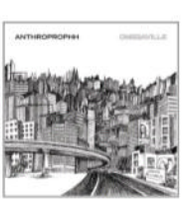


16 Och
Bolid
Taken from *Pö Om Pö*

17 Pharaoh Overlord
Blue Light Hum
Taken from *6*



18 Bonnacons Of Doom
Facing (Edit)
Taken from *Signs*



19 Anthroprophh
Omegaville/ THOTHB
Taken from *Omegaville*

20 Marlene Ribeiro
What It Is
Taken from *Toquei No Sol*

21 The Utopia Strong
Brainsurgeons 3
Taken from *The Utopia Strong*

22 Gnod
Donovan's Daughters
Taken from *Chapel Perilous*

23 Shit & Shine
Hillbilly Moonshine
Taken from *Malibu Liquor Store*

24 Petbrick
Distorted Peace
(Feat. Paula Rebellato)
Taken from *Liminal*

25 Kūr
Zimovka
Taken from *Elsewhere VXIII* (compilation)

Ed's Letter

Spotify
Stream the Prog 144 playlist at www.spoti.fi/3PSQHSz

Hello and welcome to the latest issue of *Prog* magazine. I've been listening to the work of Keith Emerson a lot of late, understandably for this issue's celebration of Keith's colossal talent, and also because I worked on the brand-new *Variations* box set, which is out now through Spirit Of Unicorn Music. In many ways, these hours of enjoying Keith's work with ELP, The Nice and his own solo work has taken me back to my early teens, when I first heard *Brain Salad Surgery*, my gateway into his world, and an album I picked up second-hand from Cheapo Cheapo Records in London's Soho for the princely sum of £1.40 (this was the early 80s!).

This issue, Keith's great friend Rick Wakeman gives a fantastic insight into the man behind the music, while we have a vast array of Keith's friends, family and fans from the prog world choosing their favourite pieces from his immense and impressive repertoire to create a list of his 30 greatest works. Of course, this being prog, I'm sure many of you will have your own ideas on Keith's finest. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Elsewhere, Trevor Rabin discusses his career to date; we look at the work of Pink Floyd's (very) quiet man Richard Wright; we go behind the scenes of the recent John Wetton tribute concert; and Steven Wilson discusses his latest album, the sonic marvel that is *The Harmony Codex*.

The Flower Kings, Neal Morse, Galahad, Ozric Tentacles, Hedvig Mollestad and more bring us up to speed with their latest releases. And we celebrate the 25th anniversary of Rocket Recordings, the fine independent prog and psych label, home to The Utopia Strong, Goat, Teeth Of The Sea and more. They have also supplied this issue's free digital sampler – please do give it a listen, I suspect you'll discover some new music that takes your fancy from artists you've not listened to before.

We are back on November 24. Until then, stay safe, and prog on...

Jerry Ewing – Editor

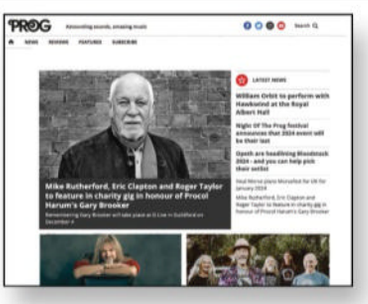
NEXT ISSUE NOV 24 ON SALE

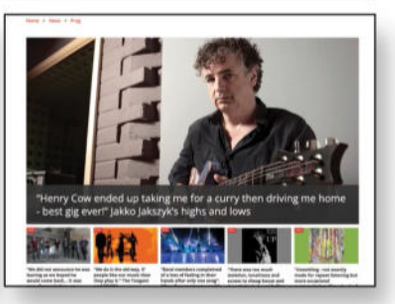
SCAN HERE TO GET OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

You can subscribe to *Prog* at www.magazinesdirect.com. See page 112 for further details.

FIND US ONLINE AT **progmagazine.com**

Get your daily fix of prog news and features at www.progmagazine.com





THE MUSICAL BOX

commemorates

50th

SELLING ENGLAND BY THE POUND

"I think these guys play it better than we did"

PHIL COLLINS

"The recreation is faithfully accurate"

PETER GABRIEL

Photos: Rushker / Alcolla

29/02/2024	Leicester	De Montfort Hall
01/03/2024	Cambridge	Corn Exchange
02/03/2024	Bath	Forum
03/03/2024	London	Eventim Apollo
06/03/2024	York	Barbican
09/03/2024	Birmingham	Symphony Hall
10/03/2024	Manchester	Bridgewater Hall
12/03/2024	Newcastle	Tyne Theatre
13/03/2024	Sheffield	Oval Hall
14/03/2024	Edinburgh	Usher Hall
16/03/2024	Glasgow	O2 Academy
18/03/2024	Guildford	G Live

THE GILMOUR PROJECT

AN ALL-STAR TRIBUTE BAND EXPLORES THE MUSIC OF DAVID GILMOUR & PINK FLOYD

UK TOUR 2024

02/02 Nottingham
Royal Concert Hall
02/03 York
Barbican
02/05 Tunbridge Wells
Assembly Hall
02/06 London
The Roundhouse
02/07 Basingstoke
The Anvil
02/09 Bath
Forum
02/10 Cardiff
St David's Hall
02/12 Glasgow
O2 Academy
02/14 Birmingham
Town Hall
02/15 Sheffield
City Hall
02/17 Cambridge
Corn Exchange
02/18 Norwich
Theatre Royal
02/19 Manchester
Bridgewater Hall

EG [LIVE EUROPE]

TICKETEK

Bloody Well Write

Send your letters to us at: *Prog*, Future Publishing, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London, W2 6JR, or email prog@futurenet.com. Letters may be edited for length. We regret that we cannot reply to phone calls. For more comment and prog news and views, find us on facebook.com under *Prog*.

GENERATION PROG

My first proper prog experience came back in 1978 when I heard *Lost* by Van der Graaf Generator. It was just full of everything and it opened a door to a whole musical universe that is continuing to expand. It was so exciting to realise that there was music like that that had been created and that there were galaxies of it to explore.

Like your first love, your first prog experience always holds a special place in your heart. I fell madly for VdGG and Peter Hammill. Hammill is the greatest English wordsmith since Shakespeare and the music he creates (with his faithful confederates) covers all bases from heartbreaking (*Looking Glass*) through nihilism (*Still Life*) and madness (*Usher*) to the fatalism of his last proper album (*Trees*).

While I think you could easily devote a whole issue to VdGG/PH, how about a cover feature like the Floyd/Tull/Crimson/Rush ones, or a really lengthy in depth interview with PH or history of VdGG? While they may not have been as commercially successful as some or all of those artists, none of them can claim to be more progressive with a capital 'P'.

If it encourages a handful of new listeners to chance a listen and creates a new generation of devotees to PH and his work, then my work here will be done!

Paul Spence, Warrington

Thanks for your email, Paul. We're big fans of Peter Hammill and Van der Graaf as well and have written extensively about both in the past. Mr Hammill graced the cover of Prog 119 and may well do so again in the future. Watch this space! — Dep. Ed.

***Prog* 119 featured a Hammill cover story. Well worth a look!**

THE THRILL OF AN ORIGINAL BAND

After seeing the amount of tribute prog acts advertised in *Prog* 142 and having witnessed two quite low-attended brilliant gigs by Pearl Handled Revolver and IO Earth recently, it does make you worry about the future of original music. I overheard a comment at IO Earth that it would have been better attended if Fleetwood Bac hadn't been playing locally.

So what do we want as an audience? New, original music or a trip down memory lane by a tribute band who have no real connection to the originals? When you've got to pay almost £50 for standard tickets to see The Australian Pink Floyd, that money could have helped quite a few up-and-coming original acts. You may also have got a few pleasant surprises along the way rather than a tribute act just doing what you expect them to do.

Trevor Hall, via email

The super-talented Paul Green Rock Academy in rehearsals with Steve Hackett at the John Wetton tribute show.

KEVIN NIXON

LIVE THROUGH THIS

I was present with a friend at the Jon Anderson concert and via streaming at the John Wetton Tribute and would like to thank your reviewers, and second their appreciation of the hard work and skill of the young people from the Paul Green Rock Academy who contributed so much to both events.

Standing at a cold, damp bus stop waiting to go home after the Jon Anderson concert, my friend and I commented on both the skill and enthusiasm of the young people and how sad it is that we did not get a concert programme detailing their names.

Still glowing from the above, and the new Pete Atkin album, I am looking forward to the album launch by Hats Off Gentlemen It's Adequate in Camden and wondering if I can make it to King's Road

LETTER

Wanting to send positive vibes and love to Danny Estrin of Voyager.

After finally representing Australia at Eurovision, coming in first in the semi-final and then making it into the final top 10 (while stuffing their faces with M&S sarnies) was awesome! Then dropping my album of the year, which has been on very heavy rotation in our household. Having Voyager on the cover of [a bundle edition of] *Prog* and fans getting their own mini Brenda the keytar is just incredible! Not to mention having a remix by Neurotech, who is another of my favourite artists – that was superb! It's been a voyage that has been an utter pleasure to watch, read about and listen to since the start of the year. The latest news [about Danny's cancer diagnosis] has been utterly gutting and I wanted to wish him a speedy recovery. Much love to him, his family and the Voyager gang. Get well soon!

Áine Ní Tómas, via email

This issue's star letter wins a goodie bag from burningshed.com *Contents may vary*

to see Dana Gillespie! What a great time to be a music lover.

George Sealy, via email

MORE LOVE FOR THE TALES!

In *Prog* 143, James Johnston wrote: "I seem to be the only surviving earthling who unconditionally loves *Tales From Topographic Oceans*." No, sir, you're not. Some of us do love the *Tales*...!

Coincidentally, I listened to the Steven Wilson remix a few days before reading the last edition of *Prog*, and I was reminded of how great this album is. Especially with the Wilson treatment, everything is now so clear, crisp, and at the right place. It sounds like it was recorded last month. Still one of my favourites.

Gilles Guénette, Quebec, Canada

THE IMPOSSIBLE TASK

A while ago I was asked to help a student by compiling a list of my Top 10 albums of all time. Loving music as I do, I readily agreed. I set about the task with great enthusiasm, keen to produce a definitive list that would surpass all others. I am a devotee of all things prog but I also like most forms of music including classical, Motown, pop and rock.

It took about 15 minutes for the realisation to set in that this was a near-impossible task. Each time I created a list I would review it and realise that there were serious omissions. I came to the conclusion that my Top 10 changes every day and I couldn't possibly get a list of just 10 that encapsulated my love of music. Even if I limited the list to just prog I couldn't get it down to 10 albums. I ended up with a list to send to the student but it was, at best, a compromise and didn't include The Who, Pink Floyd, Beethoven and many, many others.

You should give it a try and see if you can make a list of 10 albums that satisfies you as a complete representation of your favourites. I have found it impossible to even select my favourite album of all time. Good luck!

David Ackroyd, via email

THE BIG BUILD

I found the Pink Floyd article in *Prog* 142 very interesting. I, too, was there at Wembley Empire Pool in March 1977 (thanks for the memories) and have to agree with the comments of Steve Bandana. I was [also] disappointed with the attitude of the band. They just walked on without a word and started playing. Stopped, walked off and about 30-40 minutes later walked back on and started playing again. There was no interaction with the audience at all.

The effects were there, but I may as well have stayed at home and listened to the LP. But I guess the music had to be tightly constructed with little room for improvisation as it all had to be timed to fit the visuals.

Ginger Gilmour says that as the gigs got bigger then the intimacy was lost, maybe the band should have looked more closely at Waters and their own attitude. Springsteen never seems to have any difficulty building a relationship with his audiences!

Nathan Beehl, via email

Pink Floyd in *Prog* 142. Men of few words?

PROG

Future PLC, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London, W2 6JR
Email prog@futurenet.com
twitter.com/ProgMagazineUK
threads.net/@progmagazine
instagram.com/progmagazine
You can also find us on **facebook.com** under Prog

Editorial
Editor **Jerry Ewing**
Deputy Editor **Natasha Scharf**
Art Editor **Russell Fairbrother**
Production Editor **Vanessa Thorpe**
News Editor **Julian Marszalek**
Reviews Editor **Dave Everley**
Associate Editor **Jo Kendall**
Content Director **Scott Rowley**

Contributors
Jeremy Allen (JA), Joe Banks (JB), Mike Barnes (MB), Jordan Blum (JMB), Chris Cope (CC), Isere Lloyd-Davis (ILD), Daryl Easlea (DE), Dave Everley (DEV), Cheri Faulkner (CF), Ian Fortnam (IF), Paul Ging (PGI), Grace Hayhurst (GH), Cedric Hendrix (CH), Rob Hughes (RH), Emma Johnston (EJ), Jo Kendall (JK), Hannah May Kilroy (HMK), Stephen Lambe (SL), Dom Lawson (DL), Fraser Lewry (FL), Dave Ling (DML), Gary Mackenzie (GMM), Emily MacNevin (EM), Rhodri Marsden (RHM), Julian Marszalek (JM), Chris McGarel (CMG), James McNair (JMN), Grant Moon (GRM), Alison Reijman (AR), Chris Roberts (CR), Paul Sexton (PS), Johnny Sharp (JS), Sid Smith (SS), Phil Weller (POW), David West (DW), Rich Wilson (RW)

Cover image
Image: **Magictorch/Michael Putland/Getty Images**

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Commercial Director **Richard Hemmings**
richard.hemmings@futurenet.com
Advertising Sales Director – Music **Lara Jaggon**
lara.jaggon@futurenet.com
Account Director **Steven Pyatt**
steven.pyatt@futurenet.com
Account Director **Kyle Phillips**
kyle.phillips@futurenet.com
Account Manager **Lawrence Cooke**
lawrence.cooke@futurenet.com

International Licensing and Syndication
Prog is available for licensing and syndication. To find out more contact us at **licensing@futurenet.com** or view our available content at **www.futurecontenthub.com**.
Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**

Subscriptions
Online orders & enquiries **www.magazinesdirect.com**
UK order line & enquiries **0330 333 1113**
Overseas order line & enquiries **+44 (0) 330 333 1113**
Email enquiries **help@magazinesdirect.com**
CRM Director **Louise Dudfield**

Subscription delays
Disruption remains within UK and international delivery networks. Please allow up to 7 days before contacting us about a late delivery to **help@magazinesdirect.com**

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Group Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Manager **Keely Miller**
Senior Ad Production Manager **Jo Crosby**
Ad Production Coordinator **Emma Thomas**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**

Management
SVP Consumer – **Kevin Addley**
MD – Music, Photography & Design **Stuart Williams**
Head of Design – Music **Brad Merrett**
Printed by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd

Widely Recycled

Distributed by Marketforce UK Ltd. 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6JR. For enquiries, please email: **mfcommunications@futurenet.com** www.marketforce.co.uk

ISSN 2045-2260

We are committed to only using magazine paper, which is derived from responsibly managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. The paper in this magazine was sourced and produced from sustainable managed forests, conforming to strict environmental and socioeconomic standards.

All contents © 2023 Future Publishing Limited or published under licence. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used, stored, transmitted or reproduced in any way without the prior written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. Registered office: Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this publication is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. You are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this publication. Apps and websites mentioned in this publication are not under our control. We are not responsible for their contents or any other changes or updates to them. This magazine is fully independent and not affiliated in any way with the companies mentioned herein. If you submit material to us, you warrant that you own the material and/or have the necessary rights/permissions to supply the material and you automatically grant Future and its licensees a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in any/all issues and/or editions of publications, in any format published worldwide and on associated websites, social media channels and associated products. Any material you submit is sent at your own risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents, subcontractors or licensees shall be liable for loss or damage. We assume all unsolicited material is for publication unless otherwise stated, and reserve the right to edit, amend, adapt all submissions.

ipso Regulated

FUTURE
Connectors. Creators. Experience Makers.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)
www.futureplc.com

Chief Executive Officer **Jon Steinberg**
Non-Executive Chairman **Richard Huntingford**
Chief Financial and Strategy Officer **Penny Ladkin-Brand**
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244

INTRO

IF IT'S OUT THERE, IT'S IN HERE

PETER HAMMILL RE-RECORDS HIS ENIGMA-ERA ALBUMS

Prog pioneer cites Taylor Swift's motivational influence behind the newly minted versions of *In A Foreign Town* and *Out Of Water* while rising to musical challenges.

Van der Graaf Generator lynchpin Peter Hammill has taken inspiration from the unlikely figure of pop colossus Taylor Swift in his decision to re-record two of his Enigma Records-released albums: 1988's *In A Foreign Town* and *Out Of Water*, which followed two years later. Both have been unavailable to buy for some time and the new versions are set for release on November 24 via Esoteric.

"Earlier last year, I was in the process of sorting out the copyrights that I still owned from Fie! Records," says Hammill, "and it became clear that there was a dispute about the ownership of these two albums, because these were two albums that I made for Enigma in the States. It wasn't clear whether that ownership had passed on to various other people along the way or not. So I decided to take a leaf out of Taylor Swift's book and do my versions by completely [re-]recording them."

Since their original release, both albums have proved divisive among Hammill's followers though the prevailing consensus contends that the material contained within the records' grooves is let down by production techniques that date the albums in less-than-flattering ways.

"When I made *In A Foreign Town*, it was the first time that I'd begun sequencing for myself," explains Hammill to *Prog* from his West Country base. "It had sounds that were very much of the time, in particular big snares and all that sort of thing, which cropped up on both albums. So I think that, for myself, and for a lot of the fans, *In A Foreign Town*, in particular, was an album that had not a bad reputation,

Peter Hammill: taking back ownership of his old material.

"The big challenge was in replacing brilliant musicians."

but it was felt that of everything that I'd done, that's the one that, sonically, was a little bit lacking, even though the songs themselves are interesting."

With the exception of Stuart Gordon's violin that runs through the melancholy *Something About Ysabel's Dance* on *Out Of Water*, everything was re-recorded from the ground up, with each album taking around two months to get into shape at Hammill's Terra Incognita studio. And while the contemporary sonic muscularity is evident throughout both, the recording process — especially on *Out Of Water* — wasn't without its challenges. Originally recorded with guitarist John Ellis, bassist Nic Potter and saxophonist David Jackson, here Hammill shoulders the musical yoke in his own inimitable style.

"It was a big challenge because I was replacing brilliant musicians," admits Hammill. "But I guess that's one of the changes that's happened in the intervening period: I have become more of a guitarist, but I still wouldn't put myself up at the John Ellis level. But in all cases, I wasn't trying to replicate exactly what there'd been before. Some things have stayed the same because they're structurally important in terms of the material, but other things, I was just trying to do something that echoed, but in my own way, what was already there."

He continues, "Another aspect is that my voice is so many years different. A song like *A Way Out*, for instance, I've now sung hundreds of times and it's now infused with both the original meaning of the song, but also the knowledge that one's gained through performing it."

Crucially, for Hammill, it's all about aesthetics, but it does beg the question: is Peter Hammill the Taylor Swift of prog?

"No, I don't think so!" he laughs. "That's a debate that could run and run. And I look forward to the polling!"

See www.sofasound.com for more info. **JM**

PRESS/JAMES SHARROCK

This month, Intro was compiled by

Dave Everley
Jerry Ewing
Ralph Greco, Jr
Dom Lawson
Rhodri Marsden
Julian Marszalek
Grant Moon
Natasha Scharf
Phil Weller
David West

GEDDY LEE CONFIRMS SPOKEN-WORD TOUR

Five UK dates, including London, Glasgow and Sheffield, announced for December.

Geddy Lee: a real page-turner!

ANDREW CHIN/GETTY IMAGES

Rush singer/bassist Geddy Lee is to hit the road for a special five-date spoken-word tour in support of his long-awaited memoir, *My Effin' Life*, which is released on November 14 via HarperCollins.

Joined by a special guest interviewer, Lee will reveal details of his early years growing up in Toronto through to the rise of Rush, as well his personal memories of bandmates Alex Lifeson and the late Neil Peart.

The tour opens at Wolverhampton's The Civic At The Halls (December 10), before moving on to Sheffield City Hall (December 13), Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall (December 14) and Portsmouth Guildhall (December 17). It winds up at the Barbican in London on December 18.

"Writing this book has meant spending so much time living in the past," says Lee of his memoir. "I've never lived my life looking anywhere but forward, which is why I resisted doing this kind of thing for so long. Being in a band all those years was reassuring because it was an ongoing thing. It felt like it was forever. There was always unfinished business: the next record, the next set design, the next tour. It's been the theme of my life."

He adds, "But you need a lot more determination to proceed in the world of music without the comfort of your bandmates, and I can only hope that finishing this book will release me to return to what I do and love best."

Each UK ticket sold will include a copy of the book. See www.rush.com/geddylee for more information. **JM**

OPETH ANNOUNCED AS BLOODSTOCK HEADLINERS

Enslaved and Green Lung up the prog quota next year too.

Swedish prog metallers Opeth have been announced as the final headline act for next year's Bloodstock Festival, which takes place at Catton Park, Derbyshire from August 8-11. It will be the band's only live appearance in UK for 2024, and the set will be voted for by Opeth fans.

"I don't remember how many times we've played the festival, but we do have fond memories from there," says Opeth singer and guitarist Mikael Åkerfeldt. "'Filling in' for Heaven & Hell when RJD [Ronnie James Dio] had passed is one. Fuck! Can't remember a more emotional event on stage for us, to be honest. Anyhoooo, we'll be there 'rocking' and 'rolling' in our own way, playing songs that you've chosen (apparently)."

Mikael Åkerfeldt is looking forward to making new memories at Bloodstock.

ANNE-MARIE FORKER

Norwegian prog metallers Enslaved have also been added to the bill, along with occult retro rockers Green Lung, The Night Flight Orchestra and Igorrr.

See www.bloodstock.uk.com for more. **JE**

MOON SAFARI END 10-YEAR SILENCE

Swedes return this December with the much-anticipated *Himlabacken Vol 2*.

Moon Safari are finally back!

PRESS

Swedish progressive rockers Moon Safari, will end a 10-year period of inactivity when they release their fifth album, *Himlabacken Vol 2*. It'll be a direct follow-up to 2013's *Himlabacken Vol 1* and is out on the band's own Blomljud Records on December 8, and through Marquee Inc in Japan on December 6.

"We can't believe it's been 10 years; time flies!" says guitarist Pontus Åkesson. "When we released *Himlabacken Vol 1* we had four kids between us and now we have 16 together, so that's the main reason it's been so long. Of course, the children bring a lot of love and joy, but they take a lot of time out of music creation. Now the children are a little bigger, we have more time together and can be a lot more active again. No one is happier we're back than we are."

The guitarist adds that it had always been the band's plan to write a second volume to the *Himlabacken* concept arc, which charts the musicians' journey from childhood to adulthood in their small hometown of Skellefteå. The success of *...Vol 1*, however, mounted an extra pressure on the band.

"If it had been a random album I think we could have been a lot faster," he believes. "We couldn't make any mistakes with this album, it had to be perfect. It's a big pressure to keep improving every album, but I don't think we have sounded better than we do now."

In contrast to their signature sunny sound, Åkesson has told fans to expect a little darkness this time around.

"It's an album that sounds exactly like the old Moon Safari, but bigger and heavier. It's been really good to get that dark, nostalgic feeling and I think you need that darkness to make the bright brighter. The album is a perfect mix between the two, I think."

The record is also the first to feature new drummer Mikael Israelsson (ex-Black Bonzo), whose contributions extend beyond the drum kit.

"He contributed a lot production-wise with his sound knowledge and arranging," Åkesson expands. "We all grew up together and have the same values, so we clicked together straight away. We don't need to say much, we just know the feelings we all want from the music."

"We're really proud of the album," he concludes, "so I hope to see everyone on tour in the near future." **POW**

"We couldn't make any mistakes with this album, it had to be perfect."

For more see www.moonsafari.se.

INTRO extras

BRIAN ENO CELEBRATES *THE SHIP* REMASTER WITH RARE SHOWS

Following the recent release of the remastered edition of his 2016 album *The Ship* on coloured vinyl, Brian Eno will perform an orchestral reinterpretation called *Ships* with Baltic Sea Philharmonic and its conductor Kristjan Järvi. The shows take place in October in Venice (20), Berlin (24), Paris (26), Utrecht (28) and London (30). For more info see www.brian-eno.net.

Myrkur: moving in a new direction.

PRESS/GOBINDER JHITTA

MOTHERHOOD INSPIRES MYRKUR

The experience of childbirth has helped Amalie Bruun see the world afresh.

Myrkur – the nom de plume of Danish composer, singer and multi-instrumentalist Amalie Bruun – has released her fourth album, *Spine* via Relapse Records. Having navigated her way through black metal and ethereal Nordic folk music on her previous releases, she's changed direction on her latest and has embraced much grander musical sweeps with a far greater prog sensibility.

"*Spine*, for me, is almost like a new debut album," Bruun tells *Prog*, acknowledging that the artistic move came in the wake of her experiences following childbirth and the global pandemic.

"I was literally reborn [but] like a new person because I became a mother. You bring in new life into the world, but it also turns out that you, yourself, start an utterly different life. And I think that I see everything with new eyes, and not just in some happy-go-lucky way; it's been really tough with this change in the world that's been going on simultaneously [because of Covid]. I think that there's been this massive shift in us as humans and I think that reflects on the songs."

She adds, "It was very healing to write. It really felt that way, to get out of something and get to the other side. True growth is quite painful a lot of the time. Every next level requires a new you and that's not easy. That's how this album felt."

Spine was recorded in Iceland with Sunn O))) producer Randall Dunn and Bruun expects to tour the album in 2024.

See www.myrkurmusic.com for details. **JM**

ELP OFFSHOOT 3 TO RELEASE LIVE ALBUM IN NOVEMBER

Rockin' The Ritz: Live 1988 makes vinyl debut.

3, the short-lived Emerson, Lake & Palmer offshoot from the 1980s, whose original line-up released their sole studio album *To The Power Of Three* in 1988, are to issue *Rockin' The Ritz: Live 1988* on vinyl for the very first time on November 17. It'll be out through RockBeat Records, with UK distribution through Winerworld.

The band's line-up saw Keith Emerson and Carl Palmer team up with US musician Robert Berry, after Emerson had previously worked with Greg Lake and Cozy Powell on 1986's *Emerson, Lake & Powell* album.

Both acts only toured the US before splitting, so UK audiences never got the chance to see them, although subsequent live recordings have since appeared. In 3's case a pair of live albums were released on CD, *Live Boston '88* (2015) and *Rockin' The Ritz: NYC 1988* (2017) – both on RockBeat Records.

See www.robertberry.com for more information. **JE**

3: a short-lived legacy revived.

PRESS/RANDEE ST NICHOLAS

Burning Shed the best in Progressive Rock, Art Rock, Post Rock and Psychedelia

Official online stores for Steven Wilson, Porcupine Tree, King Crimson, Kscope, Jethro Tull, Yes, Bill Nelson, Big Big Train, Tim Bowness/No-Man, Bill Bruford, Eddie Jobson, Phil Manzanera, Asia, ELP and more!

Subscribe to our free weekly newsletter for exclusives, signed items and limited editions:

burningshed.com

TERRA NOVA

ALBUM LAUNCH SHOW

CART & HORSES

THE BIRTHPLACE OF

IRON MAIDEN

SUNDAY 5TH NOVEMBER

DOORS 7 PM £7 ADV / £10 DOOR

"THINK QUEEN HAVING A BARNEY WITH DREAM THEATER AS RUSH AND IRON MAIDEN DUKE IT OUT ON THE SIDELINES!"

PROG MAGAZINE

PRE-ORDER ALBUM HERE

PRE-ORDER TICKETS HERE

CYAN GO BACK TO THE FUTURE AGAIN!

Rob Reed's pre-Magenta band rework their second album for November release.

Cyan: not so much re-recording as totally overhauling their second album.

PRESS

Widely recognised as one of the busiest people in prog, Magenta's Rob Reed has returned to his side-project, Cyan to overhaul the band's 1994 album, *Pictures From The Other Side*. Originally released as a solo endeavour, the new version has been completely reworked from the ground up to include whole new arrangements and instrumentation. It will be released via Tigermoth Records on November 17. Accompanying the CD will be a bonus DVD of the album in a 5.1 surround mix and a live acoustic performance video.

The album comes after the 2021 re-recording of Cyan's debut album, *For King And Country* and features the same line-up of Peter Jones (vocals), Luke Machin (guitar), Dan Nelson (bass), Tim Robinson (drums), singer Angharad Brinn, and Reed on keyboards.

"The original one was done with such a basic set-up," says Reed. "It was all done on an eight-track cassette and drum machines, but now I've got the best studio in the world and I've learned all the lessons over the years. The songs were always really good and they were written with such innocence, but I've completely rewritten the whole album. It was really nice to go back to the songs, see what worked and didn't, so you can get a second bite at it and make it even better with all the production ideas."

Reed is fulsome in his praise of his bandmates: "The guitar solos are now better and Peter Jones' singing just transforms the songs. He's taken the album to massive heights and that's what everybody loves about it."

What with his Magenta commitments, the day-to-day running of Tigermoth Records and future plans to re-record Cyan's third album, 1999's *The Creeping Vine*, Reed hopes to perform *Pictures From The Other Side* with the band sometime in the autumn of 2024.

"We've done a couple of gigs and they've been really successful, so we're looking at doing a proper tour," he says. "We only had the first album to play when we did shows in Germany and we were struggling to get enough of a set. Now that we've got the second one finished, we've got two albums to go out with and play proper shows indoors with great lighting rather than doing festivals. And on top of that, the band is amazing."

> **"It was nice to go back to the songs and get a second bite at the album."**

Smiling broadly, he adds with a sense of pride that's wholly palpable: "When I do prog, I do it with a capital 'P'!" **JM**

See tigermothshop.co.uk for more details, releases and merchandise.

INTRO extras

RADIOHEAD'S SELWAY ANNOUNCES LIVE ALBUM

Radiohead drummer Philip Selway has confirmed he'll release a live LP in conjunction with string quartet Elysian Collective. *Live At Evolution Studios* is out through Bella Union on December 8 and forms a companion piece to *Strange Dance*. That solo record was released earlier this year and saw him collaborate with Elysian Collective and percussionist Chris Vatalaro. For more see www.philipselway.bandcamp.com.

The Omnific: sailing on a river of bass vibration.

PRESS

THE OMNIFIC UNVEIL SECOND ALBUM

Idiosyncratic Australian trio continue their singular low-end journey of bass-led prog.

Australian progressive trio The Omnific will release their second album, *The Law Of Augmenting Returns*, on February 2 via Wild Thing Records. And while they refuse to deviate from their unique formation of a drummer and two bass guitars, the band are adamant that their approach is reaping artistic dividends while growing their audience across the world.

"*The Law Of Augmenting Returns* explores the concept that the more effort you invest in your artistry, the greater the rewards," bassist Matt Fackrell tells *Prog*. "While staying true to The Omnific's identity, the band have done just that, pushing their creative boundaries to unprecedented heights. By offering a diverse mix of humorous, intense and emotionally charged content, *The Law Of Augmenting Returns* caters to a wide range of tastes and preferences."

The album comes on the back of recent EP *Phat Mackeral*.

"That was named from a playful twist on Matt Fackrell's name, simply by flipping the initial letters," laughs bassist Toby Peterson-Stewart. "The appeal with the word choice grew with the term 'phat' relating to the bass guitar, giving the name additional meaning and relation to what the band does."

The Omnific maintain that their eschewing of six-string guitars has helped them create their distinctive music.

Says Fackrell, "We believe utilising only the bass allows us to create ideas different to the same approach taken with guitars."

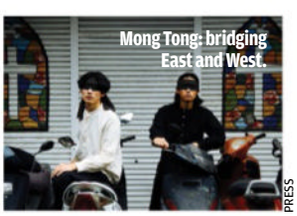
For more information go to www.theomnific.com. **JM**

MONG TONG AND MAYA ONGAKU TO TOUR EUROPE

Southeast Asian psych outfits will play UK in November.

The sounds of Southeast Asia's psychedelic underground are set to hit the West with a 13-date co-headline European tour by Mong Tong and Maya Ongaku in November. The UK shows take place at the Shacklewell Arms in London, Bristol's Crofters Rights and White Hotel in Manchester on November 13, 14 and 15 respectively. Gigs in Germany, France and the Netherlands make up the itinerary.

Mong Tong, who recently appeared in *Prog*'s *All Around The World* column, hail from Taiwan. Their new album, *Tao Fire*, draws on their homeland's cultural heritage by using gamelan music, phin guitar and tabla drums while adding sampled sounds from local weddings, funerals and traditional Taiwanese celebrations into the mix.



Mong Tong: bridging East and West.

PRESS

Maya Ongaku hail from the seaside communities surrounding Enoshima, a small island located 50km southwest of Tokyo. Their brand of spiritual-leaning psychedelia has been gaining traction in Europe.

See www.facebook.com/MongTongBand for more information. **JM**

FAD GADGETS

Rhodri Marsden on three of the latest must-have gizmos currently putting the prog in progress.

STYLOPHONE BEAT

There are, without a doubt, more sophisticated ways of making beats than pressing a small metal pen onto a metal surface, particularly when the metal pen is tethered to the unit by means of a short white cable. But while the Stylophone Beat could never claim to be state-of-the-art, it has a heart-warming connection to the culture of the 1970s, when its inspiration – the Stylophone – sold by the million. It doesn't let you export beats, quantise them or change the sounds, but from limitation comes inspiration, didn't you know? Also, it only costs 30 quid, so what are you complaining about?

www.dubreq.com

NATASHA BAMBOO SMART GUITAR

This isn't the only cutting-edge guitar out there with a hollow frame – Yamaha has a range which looks very similar – but this is the only one inspired by the solar system, with fret markers to represent the order of the planets and moons based on their distance from the Sun. In addition, the soundhole "represents a black hole from which not even light can escape in the vastness of the universe". More prosaically, it has a wealth of built-in sounds and effects and charges via USB-C, which is more than can be said for Mercury, or indeed Venus.

www.natashaguitar.com

MARSHALL ST20C

When you think of Marshall amps, you probably think of those jet-black cabs with their cursive logo, and the shimmering golden control panel that prompted Spinal Tap's Nigel Tufnel to turn it "up to 11". But before that look was adopted by the company, they produced amps and cabs in a muted fawn colour, adorned with a logo that was more boxy (known to aficionados as the "coffin logo"). This new amp is an updated version of the 1962 JTM, produced to mark Jim Marshall's 100th anniversary, and has all the period detail and ringing tone intact.

www.marshall.com

MY PROG HERO

Inspiring the wider music world...

No Rickrolling here: Rick Astley (inset) is a big Rick Wakeman fan. His wife, less so!

JEFF SPICER/GETTY IMAGES

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGE

RICK ASTLEY

Best known for the chart-topper, *Never Gonna Give You Up*, the celebrated pop singer popped his prog cherry with **Rick Wakeman** and **Camel**.

"I listened a lot of prog when I was growing up in the early 70s because my older sister was into it. She took me to see Camel play at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester when I was about 10 and it was pretty life changing. They played some of *Mirage* and some of *The Snow Goose*, and they had this huge screen behind them with the camel and the pyramid projected on it, and then *The Snow Goose* cover as well. I don't even think I'd been to a gig before that, apart from maybe Supertramp a little while before, and I'd never even seen a screen that big. I remember something in me changing when the lights went down [and thinking] 'I don't know what this is – I want to be part of this world, because it's absolutely amazing.'

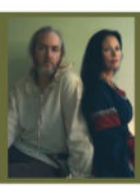
Yes' *Tales From Topographic Oceans* was another big one for me. I loved the *Roundabout* single, it's one of my all-time favourites, especially the bass playing on it, but this was something completely different. It was like some sonic adventure where anything goes. If they wanted to do 32 bars of weird intricate acoustic guitars while everyone else waits to just slam into it, they'd do it. I've got distinct memories of listening to it in someone's bedroom – I can't remember exactly whose bedroom it was, but I remember thinking, 'What is this? What's going on? Where are we?'

And don't get me started on Rick Wakeman. His solo albums in the 70s were just brilliant – *Journey To The Centre Of The Earth*, *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII* and *The Myths And Legends Of King Arthur And The Knights Of The Round Table*. My sister actually went to see him play at Wembley Arena [the former Empire Pool] when they turned it into an ice rink. That gig was just mythical to the 10-year-old me. When he announced he was doing *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII* at Hampton Court Palace [in 2009], I went online and brought 12 tickets. [It was] me, my wife, my sister and her husband... pretty much everybody. I watched the whole thing and I thought it was just brilliant. I could see my wife thinking, 'What the fuck is this?!'" **DEV**

"Rick Wakeman's solo albums in the 70s were just brilliant."

Rick Astley's new album, Are We There Yet? is out now on BMG. For more info see www.rickastley.co.uk.

PROG IN BRIEF



Harp (right), the new musical project of former **Midlake** singer Tim Smith and his wife Kathi Zung, release their debut album *Albion* via Bella Union on December 1. For more details about the project and record, head on over to www.harpband.com.

Devin Townsend is to release a 25th-anniversary expanded and remastered reissue of *Infinity* via InsideOutMusic on November 24. The musician's third album, and first under his own name, originally came out in 1998. For more see www.hevydevy.com.

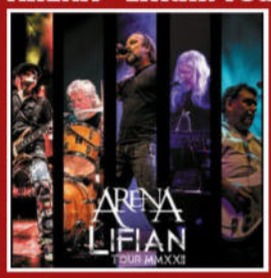
US prog rockers **Spock's Beard** will celebrate the 20th anniversary of *Feel Euphoria* with a vinyl reissue of the album, out on November 24 via InsideOutMusic. More vinyl re-releases will follow. See www.spocksbeard.com for more information.

just for kicks music

your mail order for prog & more
est. 2002 • shipping worldwide.

NEWS • IMPORTS • BARGAINS • VINYL • CD • DVD • BLURAY • PROGRESSIVE • HARDROCK • BLUES • CLASSIC ROCK • STONER

ARENA • Lifian: Tour MMXXII



This 2CD live album was recorded on this 2022 tour in various venues. A 24 page booklet is packed with photos from front and backstage. First live album with New Vocalist Damian Wilson.
2CD#38144 • 22,99€
Please check out our Arena midprice campaign online.

GLASS HAMMER • Arise

"Arise gives the impression that the creative skills of Steve Babb have gone into overdrive, is there a better storyteller in modern progressive music?"
Progradar.com
CD#38242 • 16,99€

MOON SAFARI • Himlabacken Vol. 2

After a ten year hiatus one of Swedens finest melodic Prog-Acts is back.
The new album will be out on Dec. 8th, 2023!
CD#38330 • 17,99€
Please check out our Moon Safari midprice campaign online.

ANUBIS • Sirens From Afar: Live

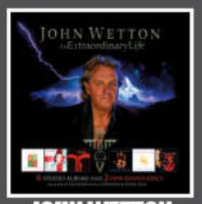
Australia-import:
Recorded live at the Baroque, Katoomba on February 27th 2021.
First 100 copies are signed by the band - only as long as stock lasts.
2CD#38329 • 19,99€

AGITATION FREE • Momentum

Agitation Free was one of the leading representatives of German experimental rock music in the early 1970s. Experience their latest studio album with the classic lineup. Out on Nov. 24th
CD#38174 • 15,99€
2LP#38177 • 23,99€
ltd 2LP col.#38178 • 25,99€

OK GOODNIGHT • The Fox & The Bird

US-Import
„With their second album, the very young Berklee College of Music graduates, OK GOOD-NIGHT, deliver arguably the best concept work of the year and an absolute prog highlight.
CD#38325 • 17,99€



JOHN WETTON
An Extraordinary Life
8CDs+Book
Box#38056 • 98,99€

TERAMAZE
Live At 170 Russell
DVD+CD#38303 • 26,99€

KING CRIMSON
Larks Tongues In Aspic
50th Anniv. / SW Remix
2LP#38130 • 36,99€
2BR+2CD#38129 • 49,99€

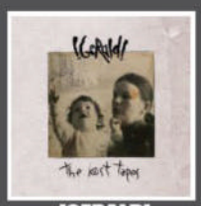
MAGMA
History Of M.D.K.
ltd. to 2.000 copies
7LP+Book + flag
#38128 • 209,99€

MOSTLY AUTUMN
Studio 2
CD#38301 • 17,99€

LAKE, GREG
Magical
7CD Box + Book
Box#38150 • 98,99€

THIS WINTER MACHINE
The Clockwork Man
CD#38091 • 16,99€

AMPLIFIER
Hologram
ltd CD & LP bundle
CD+LP#38340 • 36,99€

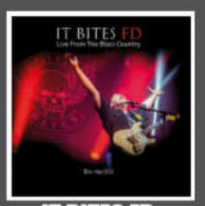


!GERALD!
The Lost Tapes
CD#38190 • 16,99€

ZAPPA, FRANK
Over-Nite Sensation
50th Anniv.
4CD+BR#38215 • 87,99€
2LP#38216 • 49,99€

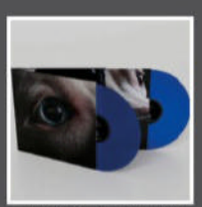
CROSS, DAVID
Ice Blue Silver Sky
CD#38222 • 16,99€

NEKTAR
Remember The Future
4CD+BluRay
Box#38229 • 69,99€

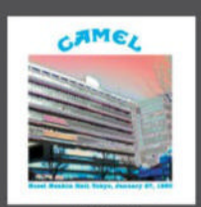


IT BITES FD
Live From The Black Country
BRay+2CD#38143 • 29,99€

FISH ON FRIDAY
8mm
CD#38000 • 17,99€



WATERS, ROGER
T.D.S.O.T.M. Redux
2LP blue#38284 • 32,99€
CD#37963 • 16,99€



CAMEL
Kosei Nenkin Hall, Tokyo
LP blue#38307 • 29,99€

ANCHORET
It All Began With Loneliness
CD#38112 • 17,99€

GALAHAD
The Long Goodbye
CD#37947 • 16,99€

ANYONE
Miracles In The Nothingness 2CD
2CD#38076 • 18,99€

CHANDELIER
We Can Fly
CD#38065 • 16,99€

ARENA
Songs From The Lions Cage
out Dec 1st - ltd. to 500 copies
2LP yellow#38271 • 44,99€

+++ **FLOWER KINGS** • Look At You Now ltd. 2LP yellow vinyl#37790 • 39,99€ +++ **TIGER MOTH TALES** • The Whispering Suite (companion CD to Whispering of the World) CD#38192 • 12,99€ +++
+++ **CHRISTINA** • Bar Stool Prophet CD#38095 • 16,99€ +++ **TIGER MOTH TALES** • The Turning Of The World CD#38096 • 16,99€ +++ **UNITOPIA** • Seven Chambers 2CD#38075 • 21,99€ +++
+++ **UPF** • Planetary Overload, Part 2 – Hope 3CD#37648 • 22,99€ +++ **HACKETT, STEVE** • Wild Orchids (Vinyl Re-issue 2023) Ltd. Gatefold red 2LP#38289 • 32,99€ +++
coming soon: Rob Reeds **SANCTUARY** • Live +++ **CYAN** • new studioalbum +++ **DAVE KERZNER** • Heart Land Mines Vol. 1 +++

webshop
Just For Kicks Music
Forsthof Julianka • D-25524 Heiligenstedten • Germany
phone: 0049 + (0) 4821 - 403000 • info@justforkicks.de
Webshop: www.justforkicks.de
catalogue

ATTENTION:
Bands, managements, labels & distributors!
We need your product and can help to establish your music in Germany.
Please get in touch and send your offers to: **info@justforkicks.de**

PROG PRESENTS NEW MUSIC
Listen to THE MYSTICAL HOT CHOCOLATE ENDEAVORS all this month on PROGZILLA RADIO
progzilla.com/listen/

THE MYSTICAL HOT CHOCOLATE ENDEAVORS

Dreamy US quartet hit the sweet spot between prog, shoegaze and psych.

INCORRIGIBLE ODDBALLS ALWAYS find their way to prog in the end. For the first part of his musical career, multi-instrumentalist Craig Schmuhl was guitarist and frontman with a death metal band called Hate Storm Annihilation. Today, he releases music as The Mystical Hot Chocolate Endeavors. His latest, *A Clock Without A Craftsman*, is an extraordinary 98-minute journey through modern prog, post-rock, shoegaze and metal: solid proof that Schmuhl has found his true calling.

"The prog thing didn't really come around until I was at college," he says. "I was just writing long songs, and a friend said, 'Oh, you mean like prog rock?' What the hell is prog rock, you know? [Laughs] I was just writing songs the way I do, but then he turned me onto Genesis and King Crimson and Yes and I went through the whole gamut, and discovered more modern bands like Porcupine Tree, Riverside and [The] Pineapple Thief. I'm like a musical sponge. I just want to take in as much as I can."

The follow-up to the Endeavors' first album, *A Humanistic Perspective*, *A Clock Without A Craftsman* somehow manages to justify its undeniably prog-friendly girth. Through towering epics and a smattering of shorter, more accessible pieces, it demonstrates the breadth of Schmuhl's musical vision, and the scale of his ambition.

"I'd always wanted to do something super-big, super-grandiose," he states. "I'm a huge [Smashing] Pumpkins fan, and *Mellon Collie And The Infinite Sadness* is one of my favourite albums. I love big records, so I was expecting a long album, but I wasn't expecting it to be this long!"

In musical terms, The Mystical Hot Chocolate Endeavors seem to have found a previously untouched sweet spot between many of modern prog's most cherished sounds and styles. As a result, the band's name makes a certain sort of skewed, psychedelic sense. Possibly.

"It was a name I came up with in high school. I was at home practising guitar and thinking about different names, and The Mystical Hot Chocolate Endeavors just came to me. I stored it in a phone note forever, just waiting for the right thing to come about. What does it mean? You have a band that doesn't know exactly what it is, and a name that doesn't know exactly what it means, and you put them together."

Does Schmuhl drink a lot of hot chocolate?

"I don't! [Laughs] That being said, I do work in a coffee shop called Ten Drops Coffee [in Plainfield, Illinois], and I have a signature hot chocolate drink there, called the Mystical Hot Chocolate Endeavor."

Schmuhl has already written material for "the next few" albums, and admits that discovering the prog path has facilitated a dizzying surge of creativity.

"Oh yeah, I am truly enjoying this. This past winter we went and recorded drums for the next full-length album. I'll do all the guitars, bass, keyboards and vocals here in my home studio. I have a great set-up here, and it allows me to be an isolated weirdo and do all the things I want to do. I want to keep people guessing with this music!" **DL**

"I love big records, so I was expecting a long album, but I wasn't expecting it to be this long!"

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Craig Schmuhl *(vocals, guitar)*, **William Candelario** *(drums)*, **Trevor Martin** *(guitar, keyboards)*, **Tyler Novak** *(bass)*

SOUNDS LIKE

Melancholy songcraft rendered in every colour of the post-prog rainbow

CURRENT RELEASE

A Clock Without A Craftsman is out now via Massacre Records

WEBSITE

www.themysticalhotchocolateendeavors.com

Not exactly hot chocolate weather, but we'll let it slide.

PRESS/TREVOR MARTIN

SORRY, WE DON'T HEAR A SINGLE

Radio edits just don't cut it, says a reader.

A little over a year ago, a publicist friend gifted me the very cool, hardbound copy of Emerson, Lake & Palmer's *Singles* box set. Sure, I was to review this new collection, but it was wonderful acquiring such a collectible, something I probably would never have gotten around to grabbing for myself. Yes, I try to be a completist when it comes to my favourite band of all time, but these box sets and collections are getting pricey, and, frankly, I'm not the biggest fan of what I generally feel are often contrived and affected singles.

When it comes to bands like my beloved ELP, Genesis (pre-Phil Collins' hit-making run), Pink Floyd, Yes and most other proggy outfits, our favourite artists don't garner too many singles releases. Sure, Genesis had an early minor hit, their first charting single in fact, with *I Know What I Like (In Your Wardrobe)*, and ELP had the right-out-of-the-starting gate *Lucky Man* and a little later, *From The Beginning*, but when these bands did manage a tickle into the Top 40, usually what happened was that the songs were edited in length by their record labels to get radio play.

It's these radio-friendly edits that make up much of the new Yes set, *Yessingles*, which has just been released by Rhino Records. These shortened versions were created with a view to increase the band's popularity and make their recordings more "palatable" for airplay on the coveted Top 40 radio stations, something Yes – FM darlings of their day – did not usually have access to (at least not in the US, where I'm based). And although I'm not picking on Yes – I have loved the band through its many incarnations – their latest 'greatest hits' release gave me pause for thought and prompted this screed.

Actually, Yes did have some sure singles that weren't edited for radio-friendly play, but generally, what's included in this collection are shorter and sharper cuts like *Starship Trooper: Life Seeker (Single Version)* and the infamous *Roundabout* single that jarringly jumps to Rick Wakeman's keyboard solo well before it does on *Fragile*. Such truncated material might make their music more accessible to the non-prog listener but I can't begin to describe the many times I have suffered whiplash from this edit, even though I know it is coming each time.

I know I am a stickler for stuff in its original form: I don't like remixes; I'm not a fan of sequels, nor of the seemingly infinite number of streaming series made from movie franchises that I feel gave up their raison d'être long ago, so I admit to some bias here. And there is a certain skill in cutting a longer song down in time to fulfil a more radio-friendly format. But the fitting of a square peg into the round (albeit commercial) hole of a single edit usually comes at the detriment of the original song, at least when that original is progressive in nature.

Of course, we still have the album versions of most of these tunes, whether remixed, remastered or in their blessed original form, so here's hoping these singles collections will inspire new listeners to seek out the cherished originals.

RALPH GRECO, JR

Got an opinion on the matter that you'd like to share? Please email us at: prog@futurenet.com. Opinions expressed in this column aren't necessarily those of the magazine.

ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Our far-out trip to far-flung prog

PRESS

Votchi: yearning for the innocence of their childhood days.

VOTCHI

With their most stable line-up and a new EP ready to go, the Czech sextet are aiming to reach out to a wider world.

Formed in Prague in the late 90s and having undergone a variety of personnel changes across four albums, Czech proggers Votchi have stabilised both their membership and sound while looking beyond their borders.

Founding member Mirek Mužík (keyboards/vocals) is now bolstered by singer Alex McBeat, guitarist Martin Smejkal, bassist Dominik Vozobule, drummer Jan Ježek and flautist Olga Vlachová. Their latest single release *Out Of Love* — their first new music since 2015 album *Out Of Jail* — trails the EP of the same name, which will be issued on Canadian label SODEH Records in early 2024.

"The band's initial inspiration came from Uriah Heep, Deep Purple and Yes," says Martin Smejkal. "By our third album, *New Religion*, we reached a more modern and progressive sound like Porcupine Tree or Dream Theater."

Along with their musical development came a change in their lyrical themes.

"We're trying to reach the inner child," says Alex McBeat. "We're really trying to see the world the way we used to when we were small. You want the good to be good, the bad to be bad, right to be right and wrong to be wrong. It'd be really beautiful to learn from children and to see the world as they do."

Though Votchi are wanting to gain as wide an audience as they can with their music, they emphatically stress their objective isn't to achieve fame purely for its own sake.

"It's about communicating with people," states McBeat.

"We really enjoy the music that we're making," adds Smejkal. "That's the major point for us. We want to reach as many people as possible so that we can connect them."

With their mission firmly in place, founder Mirek Mužík is also aware of the discipline needed to achieve it and is confident that it can be done.

"It takes a lot of planning and it's quite hard," he chuckles as he considers the work that goes on behind the scenes. "We're not always at rehearsal at the same time but, after 20 years, I'm really used to handling the situation." **JM**

"We want to connect with as many people as possible."

See www.votchi.cz for more information and news.

PROG IN BRIEF

Progressive quartet **Unprocessed**'s (right) new album *...And Everything In Between* is out on December 1 via their eponymous label. They'll tour with **TesseracT** next January and February. See www.unprocessed.band.

Berlin-based, post-modern rock trio **Zahn** are set to take a wry and sonically intense look at European holiday culture with their new album, *Adria*, which is released on November 24 via Crazysane Records. More at www.facebook.com/zahn.band.

Swiss psychedelic rock trio **Dirty Sound Magnet** have just released their new album, *Dreaming In Dystopia* through Australian label Wild Thing Records. UK and European dates will be announced soon via www.dirtysoundmagnet.com.

Jean-Michel Jarre's new collaborative collection, *Oxymoreworks* is out through Sony Music on November 3. Working with **Brian Eno,** among others, it finds him reworking nine tracks from last year's *Oxymore*. See www.jeanmicheljarre.com.

PROG PRESENTS NEW MUSIC
Listen to
POMEGRANATE TIGER
all this month on
PROGZILLA RADIO
progzilla.com/listen/

Martin Andres has poured everything into Pomegranate Tiger's third album.

PRESS

POMEGRANATE TIGER

Canadian multi-instrumentalist reflects on the rise of AI with jam-packed third album.

"THE FEELING THAT I wanted to come out of this album was that I wanted, under all circumstances, to love every second of passing music," Pomegranate Tiger mainman Martin Andres says. "I can say, with a smile on my face, that I think I've accomplished that job. I tried to not follow any rules: I went full prog. I try to tell a story with every song, I try to be as creative as possible. If five people listen to it, or five million, I literally did everything I can and there's no more that I can do."

He seems exceedingly satisfied after putting his all into his prog metal project's instrumental third album, *All Input Is Error*. Some sections are reminiscent of Animals As Leaders and Between The Buried And Me's technical prowess, but Pomegranate Tiger cram in enough detours to make it their own. Jagged riffs and drum hits are chucked around like hand grenades, but electronic flourishes and some spaced-out downtime avert the sensory overload. It really is Andres' baby, though; the Canadian composed the album and recorded guitar, bass and drums, with additional guitars by Matt Shaheen and violins by Ryan St Denis, and Marty Bak on mixing, mastering and production duties.

The roots of this tree stem back to 2010, with Andres — a proficient drummer who was raised on classical guitar before going to music school — putting together a band to provide an avenue to express himself. An early highlight was touring with Protest The Hero in support of Pomegranate Tiger's first album, *Entities* (2013). This made an impact online and 2015 follow-up *Boundless* saw the musician take more control. The project then went on hold as he spent time writing for metalcore band The Human Abstract before teaming up with globe-trotting prog metallers Oni. Now, after an eight-year gap between albums, Andres is back on Pomegranate Tiger duty, and it remains close to his heart.

Although it can be hard to convey concepts through instrumental music, he zones in on the rise of artificial intelligence for *All Input Is Error*, and its tracks are often glazed with a tech feel.

"It seems like we're creating some sort of god and nobody really knows the repercussions of it," he says. "What kind of world are we going to be living in when computers think they know better than we do?"

Despite his concerns, AI played a part in the album's creation, from helping with the artwork and a music video to putting together paperwork.

However, with Andres stuffing so much effort into his new material, not much thought has been given to what's next. He might put together a live band if the right touring opportunity comes up, and educational videos could be in the offing too, but for now, the focus is firmly on the here and now.

"Part of this new record was injecting as much emotion and enjoyment from who I am and what I like to write, back into the music," he says. "At this point I know that whatever happens, I'm not going to have any regrets." **POW**

"Whatever happens, I'm not going to have any regrets."

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Martin Andres *(all instruments)*, **Matt Shaheen** *(additional guitars)*

SOUNDS LIKE

A whirlwind of futuristic prog metal that rarely lets up

CURRENT RELEASE

All Input Is Error is out now via Bandcamp

WEBSITE

www.pomegranatetiger.com

Official Progressive Albums Chart

The prog top 30 albums

September 2023

Compiled by Official Charts Company

1	**PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING**	This New Noise *(TEST CARD)*
2	**SIGUR RÓS**	Átta *(BMG)*
3	**JETHRO TULL**	The Broadsword And The Beast *(PARLOPHONE)*
4	**MUSE**	Will Of The People *(WARNER/HELIUM-3)*
5	**PINK FLOYD**	Animals (2018 Remix) *(PINK FLOYD RECORDS/RHINO)*
6	**THE FLOWER KINGS**	Look At You Now *(INSIDEOUTMUSIC)*
7	**SOEN**	Memorial *(SILVER LINING MUSIC)*
8	**FRANKIE & THE WITCH FINGERS**	Data Doom *(GREENWAY)*
9	**MIKE OLDFIELD**	Tubular Bells – 50th Anniversary Edition *(UMC)*
10	**TAME IMPALA**	Lonerism *(FICTION)*
11	**POLYPHIA**	Remember That You Will Die *(RISE)*
12	**KING GIZZARD & LIZARD WIZARD**	PetroDragonic Apocalypse *(KGLW)*
13	**JONATHAN WILSON**	Eat The Worm *(BMG)*
14	**ROGER WATERS**	The Lockdown Sessions *(SONY MUSIC)*
15	**DOWNES BRAIDE ASSOCIATION**	Celestial Songs *(SPIRIT OF UNICORN MUSIC)*
16	**JETHRO TULL**	RökFlöte *(INSIDEOUTMUSIC)*
17	**WITHIN TEMPTATION**	Bleed Out *(FORCE MUSIC RECORDINGS)*
18	**STACKRIDGE**	The Man In The Bowler Hat *(ESOTERIC)*
19	**HAWKWIND**	The Future Never Waits *(CHERRY RED)*
20	**PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING**	Inform Educate Entertain *(TEST CARD)*
21	**YES**	Mirror To The Sky *(INSIDEOUTMUSIC)*
22	**PORCUPINE TREE**	Deadwing *(TRANSMISSION)*
23	**PORCUPINE TREE**	Closure/Continuation *(MUSIC FOR NATIONS)*
24	**THE FLAMING LIPS**	Yoshimi Battles The Pink Robots *(WARNER)*
25	**DEREK SHERINIAN/SIMON PHILLIPS**	Sherinian/Phillips Live *(INSIDEOUTMUSIC)*
26	**SWANS**	The Beggar *(MUTE)*
27	**HAWKWIND**	Warrior On The Edge Of Time *(CHERRY RED)*
28	**PERIPHERY**	V – Djent Is Not A Genre *(3DOT RECORDINGS)*
29	**MARILLION**	Holidays In Eden *(PARLOPHONE)*
30	**OBLIVION PROTOCOL**	The Fall Of The Shires *(ATOMIC FIRE)*

FIND OUT MORE AT **WWW.OFFICIALCHARTS.COM**

WIN! JOHN WETTON BOX SET

Released at the end of November, *An Extraordinary Life* celebrates John Wetton's incredible solo recordings. It's the perfect box set to cosy up to as we approach the festive season and we've got a copy to give away to one lucky reader.

Spread across eight CDs, the collection brings together expanded versions of the singer-bassist's six solo albums, from 1980's *Caught In The Crossfire* to 2011's *Raised In Captivity*, with two bonus CDs crammed full of rare material. It's been curated with the blessing of Wetton's widow, Lisa, and his son Dylan, and is presented with a 64-page book with notes by *Prog* writer and Wetton biographer Nick Shilton.

It's essential listening for fans of the musician, whose career has included stints with King Crimson, UK, Roxy Music and, of course, Asia.

To be in with a chance of winning this coveted prize, visit www.bit.ly/PROG144 and answer the following question:

After their departure from Asia, John Wetton and Carl Palmer went on to form which short-lived group?

a) Tango

b) Qango

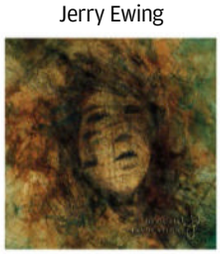
c) Anglo

For more information see www.johnwettonlegacy.co.uk

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: This competition will be open from October 20–November 24, 2023. By entering you agree to our competition rules (available at www.futureplc.com/competition-rules). Entries limited to one per household regardless of the form of entry. Use of automated devices as methods of submission are not valid forms of entry. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries received by the closing date. No employees of Future Publishing or any of its group companies or the employees of any entity which has been involved with the administration of this competition or any member of their households may enter this competition. The winner will be notified by Future by email after the closing date. If a winner has not responded after 28 days, an alternative winner will be drawn.

Now our turn...

The Editor
Jerry Ewing



JO QUAIL

Invocation/Supplication
BY NORSE

The Art Guy
Russell Fairbrother

MORAG TONG

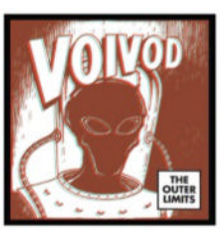
Grieve
MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN RECORDS

The Deputy Ed
Natasha Scharf

MYRKUR

Spine
RELAPSE

The Musician
Amalie Bruun



VOIVOD

The Outer Limits
MECHANIC/MCA

The Writer
Paul Ging

THE FLOWER KINGS

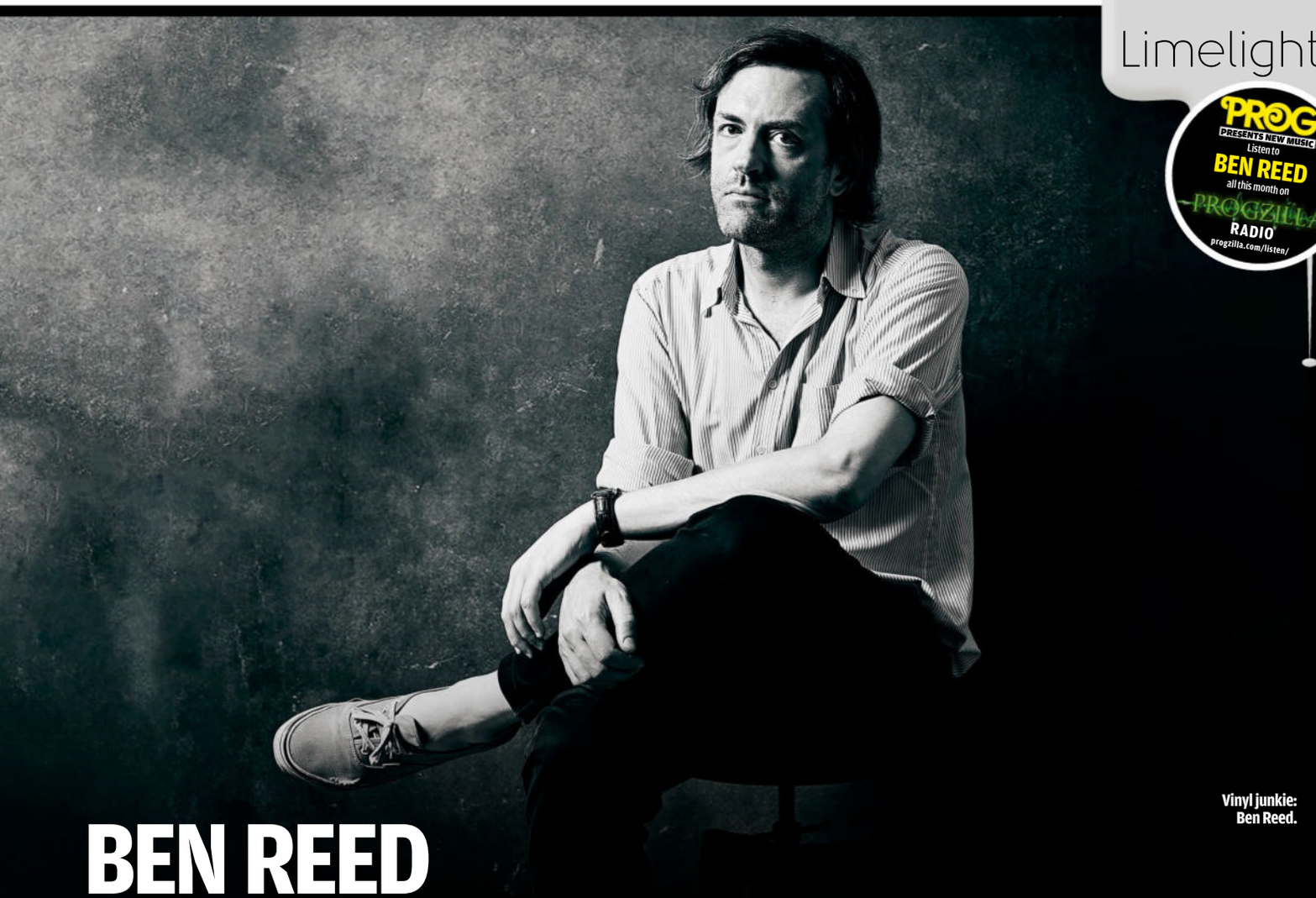
Look At You Now
INSIDEOUTMUSIC

The Reader
Steve Petch

TONY PATTERSON & BRENDAN EYRE

Northlands
ESOTERIC

PROG PRESENTS NEW MUSIC
Listen to
BEN REED
all this month on
PROGZILLA RADIO
progzilla.com/listen/



PRESS/AL STUART

Vinyl junkie: Ben Reed.

BEN REED

British jazzer taps into the spirt of Canterbury on latest solo endeavour.

ON THE DAY *Prog* speaks to him, session gun and solo artist Ben Reed is re-shelving and re-alphabetising his enormous vinyl collection. He has around 10,000 records, only a few of them on CD, and he doesn't do digital — he's never downloaded nor streamed a song in his life. "I would never listen to music digitally," he says from his cosy attic studio in west London. "One of the main incentives of making music for me is to see it spinning on my turntable."

Well worth a spin, his excellent current album *Bandaged* is his fourth solo work after 2004 debut *Tall Story*, *Who Dreams Of Hyssop* (2009) and *Station Masters* (2016). As a jobbing bassist, Reed's played for a diverse roster of hip artists on the XL and Domino labels, and notably appears on *Blond*, the smash hit album from progressive hip hop star Frank Ocean, and David Byrne's 2018 LP, *American Utopia*. There was a day in the studio with the "absolutely lovely" Peter Gabriel in 2016, and while that material never saw the light of day, it points to Reed's own proggy leanings.

"All paths were leading to prog for me since I was a child," says this music obsessive. "The first album I ever owned was *Moog Party Time* [1973 compilation]. My parents had Beethoven symphonies, Holst's *Planets* and Geoff Love's *Big Love Movie Themes*. Then my hippie uncle gave me the [1968] Island sampler, *You Can All Join In* and that's how I discovered stuff like Fairport Convention and Traffic."

At just eight years old his mind was blown by Floyd's *Interstellar Overdrive*, Zappa's *Hot Rats*, and *In The Court Of The Crimson King*. A cool teacher gave him *Close To The Edge*, and Yes have been the musical love of his life ever since — Chris Squire was his first bass inspiration, along with Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust*-era sideman, Trevor Bolder.

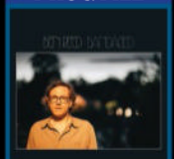
All these ingredients — plus Reed's degree in jazz music composition — can be sampled on *Bandaged*, a revelatory dive into his magpie imagination. With proudly English diction and laconic, melancholic vocals, he delivers jazz-twisty lines, tight harmonies and smart, sometimes surreal lyrics. Two highlights, the insistently groovy *Tale Of Cleopatra* and dark closer *Smiling*, draw on works by the late poet Elizabeth Adeane.

Caravan/Soft Machine's Jimmy Hastings performs some of the exquisite, Canterbury-esque horn lines, and while acclaimed pianist Ross Stanley (Steve Howe Trio) and pedal steel legend BJ Cole add class, Reed takes care of pretty much everything else. From sound to style, *Bandaged* is admirably analogue and likeably lo-fi. Reed's bass amp is from his former primary school's PA, while the speaker was salvaged from his parents' now-defunct church.

"There's unlimited amounts of digital jiggery pokery these days," he says. "At the end of the day, my favourite kind of music is a strong melody, chord sequence and structure, played and sung as well as possible by guys in a room, recorded as well as possible. I want to trust what I'm listening to." **GRM**

"One of the main incentives of making music is to see it spinning on my turntable."

PROG FILE



LINE-UP

Ben Reed *(vocals, bass, drums, guitars, keys)*

SOUNDS LIKE

A jazz graduate who's been mainlining Caravan, Zappa and Todd Rundgren while locked in the finest musical instrument shop, circa 1976

CURRENT RELEASE

Bandaged is out now on Esoteric

WEBSITE

www.benreedmusic.com

BAROCK PROJECT

BAROCK PROJECT
& TIGER MOTH TALES ACOUSTIC
TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE UK

ACOUSTIC with PETER JONES

LIVE AT TRADING BOUNDARIES

FRIDAY 17th & SATURDAY 18th
NOVEMBER 2023

Trading Boundaries

BOOK TICKETS VIA QR CODE
OR TRADINGBOUNDARIES.COM

GUEST ROOMS AVAILABLE ON SITE!

PROG PRESENTS NEW MUSIC
Listen to MAEBE all this month on PROGZILLA RADIO
progzilla.com/listen/

MAEBE

The British guitarist mashing up prog genres to build his ultimate wall of sound.

"I WANT IT to be a celebration of instrumental guitar in all its forms," says Michael Astley-Brown, the man behind Maebe. Raised in the Cotswolds, Astley-Brown grew up on grunge and pop-punk before discovering the joys of post-rock at university. Hearing Mogwai proved a transformative experience, because "it made me realise I don't need a singer to get my ideas across".

The love of guitar led to a career in music journalism writing for *Guitar World* before a series of personal upheavals provided the impetus for Maebe's eponymous 2020 debut. "I was like, 'The shit has really hit the fan, why don't I try to do this thing I've always wanted to do? I'm going to make an album.'"

On *Maebe* and now *Rebirth. Relive. Repeat.*, Astley-Brown played or programmed everything himself, cherry-picking concepts from multiple progressive genres. "I wanted to pull from the post-rock soundscapes, the math rock slightly wonky riffs, and I'm a big Joe Satriani guy, I grew up on that shred stuff as well," he says. "That sense of melody is something I felt I could bring into a post-rock, math rock context without it verging into cheesy 80s shred territory. It's striking that balance."

On *Rebirth. Relive. Repeat.*, Astley-Brown wanted everything to be dreamier, heavier and more melodic. "It's a bit of a cliché but I do want to take the listener on a journey, and I want each song to be almost its own dimension that the listener can get lost in," he says. "That's what drove me to do so many guitar layers and different sounds, but also keeping the melody very much at the forefront. I tend to make every song quite epic. It's probably that Smashing Pumpkins euphoric, happy guitar explosion thing and I lean into that on some songs."

While Maebe began as a one-man studio project, it's grown into a live beast powered by fellow guitarists Will Thomas and Duncan Stagg, as well as bassist Patrick da Costa and Nicholas Appelgren on drums. "It's very much a wall of sound because I wanted to replicate those layers on the album and I didn't want to use tracks or loops," says Astley-Brown. "Meeting a group of like-minded individuals who have all grown up on the same weird musical diet has really helped to solidify the sound of the band. And the feedback we've had from live shows has been amazing."

Maebe marked the release of the new album with a headline show at Rough Trade in their hometown of Bristol, where the vibrant math rock scene has embraced them. "To start playing a riff and someone goes, 'Yes! I love this song!', that's what I dreamt about as a kid," says Astley-Brown. "I grew up in Gloucestershire, there's no music scene, all this stuff seemed impossible to me. So, to be doing it now in my 30s, even though my body's a wreck after every show, I feel like I'm finally where I want to be musically and in my life. It's genuinely a really powerful thing." **DW**

"I feel like I'm finally where I want to be musically and in my life."

PROG FILE

LINE-UP

Michael Astley-Brown *(guitars)*

SOUNDS LIKE

Flying over a beautiful undulating landscape then slamming into turbulence. Fire the thrusters, blast through the atmosphere and drift freely into space. With guitars

CURRENT RELEASE

Rebirth. Relive. Repeat. is out now via Bandcamp

WEBSITE

www.maebe.bandcamp.com

Living the dream: Michael Astley-Brown.

PRESS/OLLY CURTIS

Q&A

HEDVIG MOLLESTAD

The Norwegian powerhouse discusses her new collaborative project, retaining artistic freedom, and performing on the same bill as one of her musical heroes.

Words: Sid Smith **Portrait:** Julia Marie Naglestad

Guitarist and composer Hedvig Mollestad has a formidable work ethic. In addition to her countless live shows and guest appearances over the years, she's released seven studio albums with her acclaimed Hedvig Mollestad Trio since 2011, as well as another three records with expanded ensembles. Recently appearing as artist-in-residence of the internationally prestigious Molde Jazz Festival, she's back with a new collaboration *Weejuns*, which finds her exploring improvised music in the company of drummer Ole Mofjell and Motorpsycho/Elephant9 keyboardist, Ståle Storløkken. Clearly a musician who doesn't like standing still, *Prog* finds out what motivates her.

Did you always know you were going to be a guitarist?
I clicked with the instrument very early but I never thought that would mean being a musician. My parents were working-class people who had guitars and played songs at parties. I remember thinking the guitar was beautiful and being fascinated by chords and the sound. I was 23 when I started the Norwegian Academy Of Music and there I studied be-bop guitar. I wasn't able to play it and felt like an idiot after every lesson but it was very valuable because it gave me structure and a common ground with the jazz community. I was 25 when I decided to become a musician.

In 2014, your trio shared the bill with John McLaughlin at London's Royal Festival Hall. What was that like for you?
When the promoter told me his idea of pairing us on the same bill, I couldn't believe my ears. I was six or seven months' pregnant, and the week before that show I was really ill and had to have my appendix removed. The doctor said I couldn't travel but I explained that I had to go as I was going to be playing with someone that had defined the path for my profession and she said, "Okay, well you have to go!" [Laughs] John McLaughlin has been defining the parts of my passion not only for me but an entire generation of players. He's got a curious mind that never stops looking forward. People can say what they want about the directions and aesthetic choices he's made — I don't care so much about all that. His presence is very, very inspiring.

"I like to play and rehearse loud and I like to make riffs. They are what make life worth living."

A glance at your discography shows you've released a lot of albums in a relatively short space of time...
When I'm making music and doing different projects, to me, the process hasn't ended until I have recorded it. That's actually an important part of the process. When I've spent time and energy into making something and putting people together to record it, to have an album at the end is to feel that I've completed it.

You obviously have a close relationship with your record label, Rune Grammofon.
Very much so. Label owner Rune Kristoffersen gives me total freedom artistically. I really like the way that we communicate and the freedom you get from working closely to somebody that cares for the music and also respects the choices of the artist. That's very, very rare.

The new trio heard on your latest album, *Weejuns*, is quite different to your regular trio and you're working with Ståle Storløkken again.
That's right. We worked together on my 2022 album, *Maternity Beat*, with the Trondheim Jazz Orchestra. He's an exquisite improviser. I feel very connected to him on a musical level. Ståle does his most magic stuff when he's listening and not just playing stuff that I've written for him. He has a presence. You can play together and even though you don't know what you're going to play, and you play totally different things, it still has a connection. I've learned so much just from the very few sessions that we have had since we started the Weejuns Trio.

Some of *Weejuns* is reminiscent of King Crimson's approach to improvisation in the *Larks' Tongues*... era. Was it intentional?
I'm very connected to a lot of the Crimson material, but I didn't hear them until after I started to work with the Hedvig Mollestad Trio. I didn't listen to heavy or progressive rock until I was in my 20s. When you have capable musicians who can make beautiful music outside of the usual framework, it's important to try to go there because it'll change the rest of the set. With the trio, we have been trying to do that from the very start, to have places inside the tunes that are very, very open. Our [2016] album *Black Stabat Mater* is a record where we do a lot of that. The structure of tracks like *Approaching* and the last part of *On Arrival*, we have so little knowledge of what is going to happen. Also with *Somebody Else Should Be On That Bus*, that's just a riff and everything else is about seeing where it takes us.

The riff is an incredibly important part of what the Hedvig Mollestad Trio does, isn't it?
I like to play and rehearse loud and I like to make riffs. They are something that makes life worth living [laughs].

Your trio have been described as being jazz, metal, prog, and often all of the above. How would you describe them?
It's obviously eclectic but I don't have anything to say about where our music belongs. I think the nature of jazz is to be open and curious about what you hear and to act upon that.

What's next for the trio?
We're still touring and we're looking forward to making a record again. It's three years since we were in the studio so we have been talking about it for a long time.

***Downbeat* magazine cited you as "one of the artists who could shape jazz for decades". How's that going for you?**
I'm very grateful but at the same time if you are going to be honest about your music you can't read much into these things.

Weejuns is out now via Rune Grammofon. See www.facebook.com/hedvigmollestadofficial for more information.

Gibson
CUSTOM MADE

"We laughed a lot!"

To celebrate the release of **Keith Emerson**'s *Variations* box set, **Rick Wakeman** fondly looks back on his memories with the pioneering musician whom he refers to as his "blood brother in keyboards" and shares details of the concert that he and Emerson once dreamed of playing together.

Words: Mike Barnes **Images:** Tony Ortiz

The heyday of progressive rock in the 70s was also the heyday of the flamboyant, classically trained keyboard player – the "keyboard wizards" as they were known at the time – and none were more flamboyant than Keith Emerson and Rick Wakeman.

Emerson was never going to be content sitting studiously behind his keyboard. Jimi Hendrix had played his guitar with his teeth, rubbed it over his body and speaker cabinets, and set fire to it. He'd raised the bar high in terms of showmanship and Emerson was keen to claim some of that action. Back in the late 60s, while in The Nice, he stuck knives into the keys of his Hammond L-100 organ to produce a drone, rocked it back and forth to get feedback, appeared to hump it, and at times lay underneath it as if it were humping him, an approach he carried on into the 70s with Emerson, Lake & Palmer. Although he stopped short of setting fire to the Hammond, he did burn a painting of an American flag at the Royal Albert Hall in June 1968 in protest against the Vietnam War, earning The Nice a lifetime ban from the venue.

Although much kinder to his instruments, Wakeman was also very much a showman with his glittering full-length capes and lavish productions such as 1975's *...King Arthur And The Knights Of The Round Table* on ice.

"Keith and I are very similar in many ways in as much as we didn't want to be extras, we didn't want to be bit men. That wasn't our style at all," he says.

This prompted rumours in the media that there must be some kind of rivalry between the two keyboard players.

"We always sort of thought it was a bit bizarre because we play completely differently and used different instrumentation, and we got on very well," Wakeman recalls. "Whenever Keith was back in the UK, we'd meet up. I remember one particular lunch [in the early 2000s], I noticed that a couple two tables down were earwigging and interested in what we were saying. Keith noticed that as well. When they'd finished their meal, they stopped by our table and the guy said, 'I'm sorry to disturb you, but can I just say how wonderful it is to see that you've made up and you're friends now.' Keith went, 'No, we're not, we're just having lunch

Nemeses? Hardly! The keyboard wizards outside the Royal Albert Hall.

"He had a good feel for classical, jazz and rock. He had that ability to be able to mix them all in a big bowl together and he was bloody good at it."

because I'm suing him!' The guy went, 'Oh, I'm sorry.' Keith had a really good sense of humour and we did laugh a lot."

The two friends' paths first briefly crossed when Wakeman was playing with the Strawbs at The Lyceum in early 1971, but they met properly later that year on an American tour – with Yes third or fourth on the bill and ELP second or headlining.

"We laughed about it," says Wakeman. "He said, 'I watched you through the curtain,' and I said, 'Yeah, I watched you through the curtain as well.' We chatted, but like a lot of bands, the only time you get to see them is when you're

In happier times: Emerson and Wakeman at the Prog Awards in 2014.

passing in airports, or on the road. But we did bump into each other a lot."

Five years Emerson's junior, Wakeman first saw him play with The Nice in the late 60s.

"The Nice were tremendous," he recalls. "Keith did make an impression, that's for sure. He worked so well in a trio with bass and drums. And it paved the way for ELP. It was a line-up that he was very comfortable with, because he could have a lot of control and freedom. I saw him on numerous occasions and the same pieces were performed, but were always a little bit different. If he decided to go off on a tangent both Greg [Lake] and Carl [Palmer] were well aware of where he was going."

Wakeman notes that Emerson also helped liberate the rock keyboard player from the role of accompanist.

"The Nice were an organ trio, so everybody could adapt to how loud he could be," he says. "One of the big problems with keyboards, certainly in bands in the late 60s and early 70s, was [that] guitarists were so loud that when it came to a solo for the organ, or piano or electric piano, the whole band had to drop in volume. Then the wonderful Bob Moog gave us the Moog synthesiser, an instrument that could cut through concrete, and Keith embraced this brilliantly."

One of Emerson's main skills was to create a fusion of musical styles. The piano piece *High Level Fugue* on The Nice's *Five Bridges Suite* is a case in point as it appears to be informed by Bach, jazz and boogie-woogie. And while the melodies of classical pieces have been perennially pilfered for songs — and The Nice pottered along with an orchestra playing part of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* symphony on the live side of *Five Bridges* — with ELP he explored the leaner, often more angular approach of 20th-century composers such as Bartók, Janáček, Ginastera and Copland and incorporated that into the group's music.

"He was an innovator," Wakeman recalls. "A great jazz player, but he could fuse jazz and rock like nobody else, and fusion is not an easy thing to do. You can't just go, 'I'll do a classical bit here, and a jazz bit here', it has to be a natural feel. And he had a good feel for classical, jazz and rock. He had that ability to be able to mix them all in a big bowl together and he was bloody good at it.

"His piano playing was a strange sort of modern classical with jazz thrown

WILL IRELAND/FUTURE OWNS

in, which was quite unique. He liked to have a crack at anything, really. He did the *Piano Concerto* [*No.1* on *Works Volume 1*], and he freely admitted to me, 'That's ego.' We discussed that as well: if you haven't got an ego, you shouldn't be doing this."

Emerson wasn't averse to putting some crunchy dissonances in his playing, such as on *Blues Variation* from *Pictures At An Exhibition*.

"Keith could take a basic chord and throw a few other things in there that you wouldn't expect to hear," explains Wakeman. "It gave him a unique sound."

For many, Emerson and Wakeman playing together would be a kind of prog dream team. But it's clearly still a source of annoyance for Wakeman that their respective managers were keen to make sure that it didn't happen.

"Keith and I had great plans on how to do the concert," he explains. "Basically, we would start in darkness and then *Tarkus* or *Fanfare For The Common Man* would start up but when the lights came on, it wouldn't be Keith onstage, it'd be me playing it. And then halfway through that there'd be a bit of a swap-over without the audience knowing and *King Arthur* would come up and it'd be Keith doing it. We thought that'd be great fun. And then a new piece that we would do together – it would be a great way to open a show. I've still got all the notes somewhere. We had quite a few meetings on it."

They also talked about recording an album together.

"We did exchange pieces of music to work on, which excited us a lot about what we could do," Wakeman recalls. "And we felt we could easily do an album, because our styles are so different it would be really obvious who was doing what."

"Keith left a lot of happiness and music behind as well, which overrides the sadness. There'll be people discovering it in 100 years' time."

They were also keen to team up with Jon Lord to do a three-man keyboard tour with a band, and the three of them were set to play at the Sunflower Superjam all-star charity concert at The Royal Albert Hall in 2011. Wakeman and Lord played a piece called *It's Not As Big As It Was* – its title coming from a quip Wakeman made when using the urinal in the gents' toilet in the building – but Emerson pulled out a few weeks before due to an ongoing neurological condition that was causing problems with his playing.

"He called up and said, 'Look, I can't do it, I can't come over. I don't want to let everybody down.' He really was suffering with his hands and arms. I saw Keith on a few occasions when he was over in the UK and was really concerned about his hands. He was quite depressed about it."

Wakeman remembers that Emerson was very up and down when discussing what he might achieve next. One avenue he had intended to pursue was orchestrating his compositions and learning to conduct.

"I remember talking to Keith and I said, 'Look, just because there are limits to what you can do playing-wise, you've got so much more you can offer. You've got your compositions. You can do lectures in music. People will love to learn from your experiences.' But the problem was he wanted to play and everything else was almost secondary."

Jon Lord passed away with pancreatic cancer in 2012 and Emerson died by suicide in 2016.

"It was quite devastating," Wakeman says. "Because I'd lost my two blood brothers in keyboards."

Emerson was such a major figure and an influence to so many keyboard players. Had he ever discussed what he wanted to achieve in music?

"We talked about music a lot and neither of us went, 'Oh, aren't we clever?' It would be safe to say that Keith and I just wanted to be the best we could at what we did," Wakeman says. "Neither of us liked being told what to do. But we weren't trying to change the world. We were trying to throw our bit into the pot, shall we say."

The 20-CD box set *Keith Emerson – Variations* covers his career from before The Nice to movie soundtracks, the Keith Emerson group, and his orchestral music. Does Wakeman feel that there's one aspect of his music that particularly stands out?

"Well, I think you have to say ELP," he replies. "Because what he did was extremely clever. He took The Nice to a new stage and when you consider how good The Nice were, you think, 'Can you improve on that?' Which he did. He found two perfect foils in Greg and Carl, who had come up in early prog rock so understood all of the different fusions, plus suddenly he was able to throw in the wonderful Moog. Music was entering a new era, technology was entering a new era, and they got it spot on. ELP happened at absolutely the right time.

"It's a tragic end to the story," he concludes. "But the great thing is that Keith left a lot of happiness and music behind as well, which overrides the sadness. There'll be people discovering it in 100 years' time."

Rick Wakeman's The Prog Years 1973-1977 box set is out on November 30 and his The Return Of The Caped Crusader tour resumes in February 2024. See www.rwcc.com for more information.

The Talented Mr Emerson

A remarkable composer, arranger and virtuoso with a ruthless disdain for the wellbeing of the Hammond organs that became part of his signature sound, **Keith Emerson** built the foundations upon which progressive rock stands to this day. With help from the good and great of prog rock and beyond, here are 30 classic cuts from the genius of the Moog.

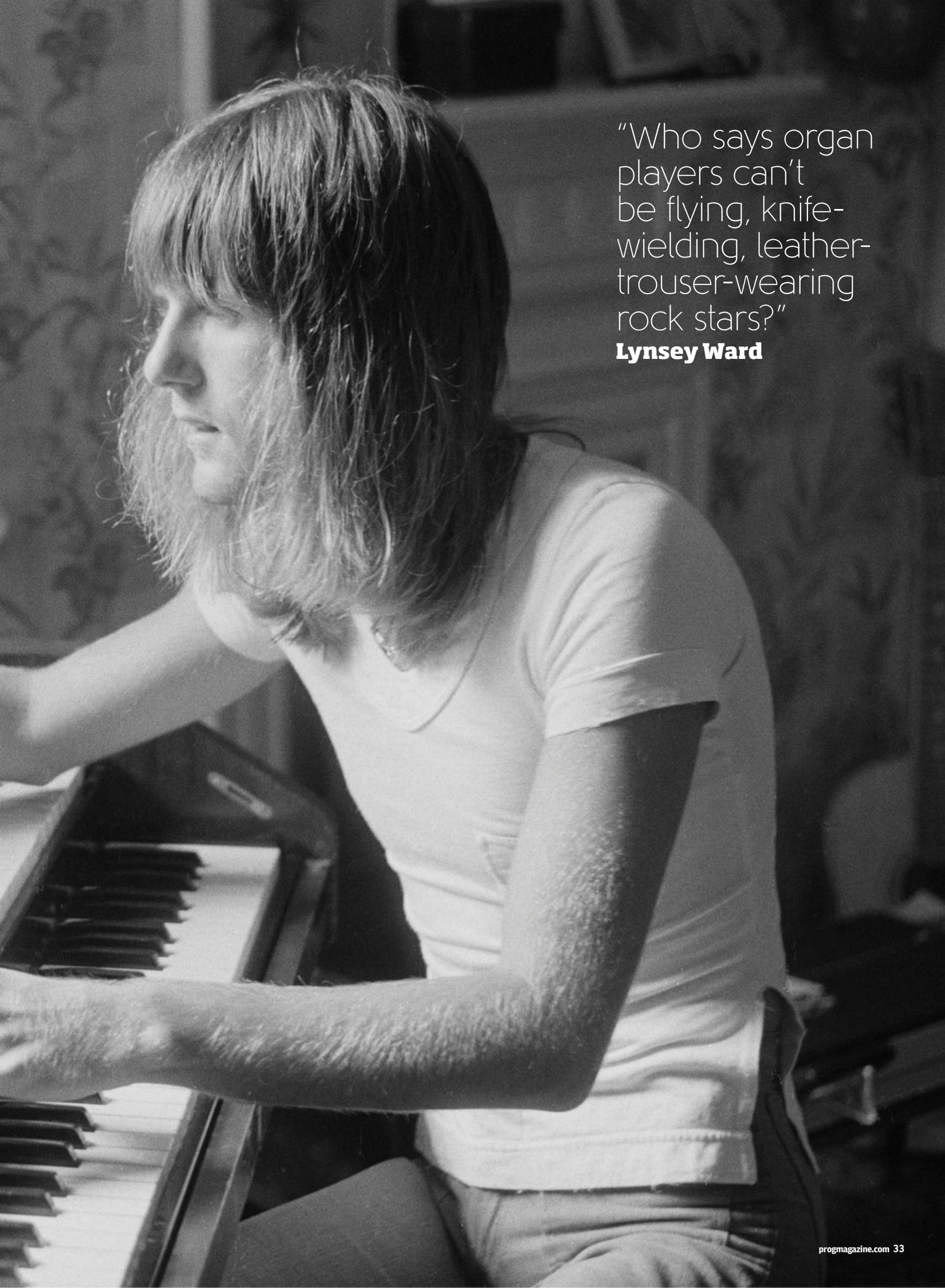
Written and compiled by David West **Image:** Michael Putland/Getty Images

The master of his art, working at home, September 4, 1971.

It was Pablo Picasso who once said, "Learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist." Keith Emerson's extraordinary career offers a case study in the elegant expression of Picasso's credo. Across six decades, Emerson tore down barriers between genres, he redefined the image of the keyboard player through his wild onstage performances and played a pivotal role in the meteoric rise of progressive rock from small British clubs like The Marquee to massive American arena tours.

Proving Picasso's maxim, Emerson wasn't a product of the self-indulgent free jazz movement of the 1960s that rejected notions about mastering the craft before attempting to make art. As a precociously talented young pianist, Emerson was versed in boogie-woogie, jazz and blues; he could play classical pieces and songs from the musical theatre repertoire with equal fluency, or turn his hands to soul and rhythm and blues, skills that led to his first break in the music business when he formed The Nice to back up the former member of the Ikettes, soul singer PP Arnold. Emerson took all these disparate styles and projected them through the prism of his own restless imagination to push rock music far beyond its blues-based origins, mixing psychedelia, classical, and jazz together to create something entirely original: progressive rock.

Beginning in The Nice years, Emerson distinguished himself as a fearless arranger of other people's compositions. He took Leonard Bernstein's *America* from *West Side Story*, and blended it with Dvorak's *New World Symphony* to reframe the music in a startling, new light. When The Nice came to an end, Emerson teamed up with Greg Lake from King Crimson and Carl Palmer of Atomic Rooster and The Crazy World Of Arthur Brown to form prog's first supergroup. It was indicative of the acclaim already surrounding the three members that they simply named their new



"Who says organ players can't be flying, knife-wielding, leather-trouser-wearing rock stars?"
Lynsey Ward

venture after its constituent parts. With Emerson, Lake & Palmer, the keyboardist continued to reimagine and rearrange songs from beyond rock's repertoire, including works by Modest Mussorgsky, Béla Bartók, and Aaron Copland, presenting his interpretations with rock'n'roll showmanship and Emerson's considerable flair for theatricality. While Bernstein had famously despised what The Nice did to *America*, Emerson received the blessing of Copland and Alberto Ginastera to interpret their works, as the composers recognised the seriousness of his intent. It was an approach that merrily crossed genres and demographics.

"Keith's use of classical motifs and borrowed melodies might have seemed a little highbrow," observes Ian Anderson, "but his leather biker jacket and the dagger used to stab his Hammond organ gave it all a macho touch, which endeared Keith to the biker fraternity in many countries."

ELP's ambitions were apparent from the outset. Their second public appearance was in front of 600,000 people at the 1970 Isle Of Wight Festival, where their performance included firing a pair of cannons. The trio were a sensation, undertaking massive tours across the US, travelling in a convoy of trucks with the three stars' names proudly displayed on the roofs of the trailers. Memorably captured on *Welcome Back My Friends To The Show That Never Ends...*, ELP were a riotous onslaught of sound and fury onstage. But as the members' individual musical predilections pulled them in opposing directions even as the band struggled with the costs of touring their lavish productions, ELP split up for the first but not the last time in 1979.

In the 1980s, Emerson began composing film soundtracks, including the Sylvester Stallone action thriller *Nighthawks*, and a pair of Italian horror movies — *Inferno* by Dario Argento, and Michele Soavi's *The Church*. In the new millennium, Emerson scored music for the king of the monsters in Ryuhei Kitamura's *Godzilla: Final Wars*. He reunited with Greg Lake for a tour in 2010 that was captured on *Live From Manticore Hall*, before reassembling ELP with Carl Palmer for what proved to be their final performance at London's High Voltage Festival in July 2010.

Where his early work was marked by that blend of formidable ability and onstage flamboyance, the last chapter of Emerson's career shone the spotlight on his talents as a musician of accomplishment and depth. He released an album of solo piano performances called *Emerson Plays Emerson* and realised his orchestral ambitions with 2012's *The Three Fates Project*, wherein he combined The Keith Emerson Band with the Münchner Rundfunkorchester conducted by Terje Mikkelsen.

"I feel that Keith always wanted to work with orchestras and to be a composer more than a performer. And he was never given a real chance to do that," says Mikkelsen. "I've played with some of the top soloists in the world and when they hear I worked with Keith Emerson, [they say] 'Oh! He's the reason I started to like classical music!'"

Here, 30 of Emerson's fans, friends and family celebrate a musical marvel whose artistry couldn't be bound by genres, rules or expectations.

AVALON

The Nice (clockwise from top left): Davy O'List, Keith Emerson, Brian Davison, Lee Jackson.

THE DIAMOND HARD BLUE APPLES OF THE MOON

The Nice – The Thoughts Of Emerlist Davjack, 1968 (Bonus Track)

IAN ANDERSON, Jethro Tull

"I first heard *...Apples Of The Moon* at the Marquee Club in the early months of 1968 when The Nice and Tull were regular resident bands. With the benefit of that original repertoire, The Nice stood out from the usual blues

band peers with more complex songs and music arrangements that ushered in the beginnings of progressive rock.

"...*Apples Of The Moon* is typical of early Nice, and even the later ELP, in drawing upon classical fanfare-like elements. The rhythmic drumming of Blinky Davison in this song inspired the drum part to the early Tull tune *A Song For Jeffrey*. The adventurous and energetic organ playing of Keith Emerson was a sight to behold and given credibility by his obvious pianistic musical skills and academic training. The vocals of Lee Jackson, Blinky Davison's drumming and Davy O'List's unusual non-blues guitar style were a great encouragement to me in the months to come to gradually replace the blues-based early Tull with a more original and eclectic mix of musical inspiration."

RONDO
The Nice - The Thoughts Of Emerlist Davjack, 1968

DEREK SHULMAN, Gentle Giant
"I had always loved Keith's playing in The Nice. It was a complete surprise that they could reinterpret this unusual Dave Brubeck Quartet 9/8 signature classic into a 4/4 rock track and still retain its appeal. This was always something Keith was able to do superbly throughout his musical career with both ELP and his solo works.

"The Dave Brubeck Quartet were, in a sense, a jazz precursor to artists like Frank Zappa, ELP, Crimson and, of course, Gentle Giant. Unusual time signatures and improvisation while still retaining musical accessibility. The Nice were able to pare down *Blue Rondo À La Turk* to *Rondo* and still be The Nice.

"Performance-wise, Keith was one of the first keyboard players to actually stand and play brilliantly. He understood that just sitting behind a Hammond organ could be a hindrance to being an entertainer as well as a musician. He was able to use his skills to make the keyboards his foil in the same way that Jimi Hendrix used his guitar. A very rare achievement for a keyboardist."

AMERICA
The Nice single, 1968

This explosive arrangement of a showpiece tune from *West Side Story* was controversial from the start, intended as a critique of violence in the United States following the murders of JFK and Martin Luther King. Then when the band burned a painting of the American flag onstage at the Royal Albert Hall, with the US ambassador in the audience no less, their notoriety was assured.

TREE STEWART, The Emerald Dawn
"I had organ lessons from age eight to 18 and I thought the organ was a deeply uncool instrument to play. If only I had been shown Keith Emerson when I was young!

"*America* is a special track for me for many reasons. I was involved in youth theatre when I was a teenager, and I was in the play *West Side Story*. I was one of the singers and dancers in *America* so to hear a band take this track and turn it into a political statement with insane theatrics on the organ was a total revelation. The theatrics of the live versions of this track also stand out to me. I am a circus and physical theatre performer and teacher by profession, so to see someone jump over their keyboard and swing it about while still managing to play really well is truly incredible."

> "Keith's use of classical motifs and borrowed melodies might have seemed a little highbrow, but his leather biker jacket and the dagger used to stab his Hammond organ gave it all a macho touch, which endeared Keith to the biker fraternity in many countries."
>
> **Ian Anderson**

INTERMEZZO FROM THE KARELIA SUITE
The Nice - Ars Longa Vita Brevis, 1968

By their second album, The Nice had shrunk from a quartet to a trio, following the departure of guitarist Davy O'List. Emerson was fearlessly exploring the possibilities of melding rock with classical and jazz – the dawn of progressive rock was at hand.

GEOFF DOWNES, Asia, Yes, DBA
"Keith's treatment of classical music was totally unique. In particular, his early work from The Nice laid the foundations for his incredible career. My favourite album from that period was *Ars Longa Vita Brevis*, and his interpretation of the *Intermezzo* from Sibelius' *Karelia Suite* really stood out for me. It became his signature style in many ways – laying down the main classical theme, and then heading off into his wonderful world of intricate blues and jazzy extemporisation. A true genius."

FOR EXAMPLE
The Nice - Nice, 1969

MIKE KENEALLY
"I'd read about The Nice in *Hit Parader* magazine, but somehow hadn't found any of the records, until I was around 11 and I saw a Columbia Special Products repackaging of their third album, simply entitled *Nice*, with a strange-looking orange cover.

"I found it really thrilling that the song just kept going and going and going – it felt like a gift, a really generous one, and Keith's organ and piano playing is so on point throughout. For a song essentially based on a blues structure, I was amazed at how many styles were visited during the course of the piece – it's really adventurous! And there's horns playing all of a sudden! This music also sported a sense of humour that seemed more whimsical than ELP's usual state of grandeur, and somehow kinder than ELP's occasional comedy pieces. Keith's composing and playing imprinted on me hard at that time, and the influence remains – every time I play a sequence of fourths on a keyboard, I can feel him hovering nearby."

HANG ON TO A DREAM
The Nice - Nice, 1969

Emerson transforms Tim Hardin's 1966 tune, *How Can We Hang On To A Dream*, from a gentle folk waltz into a psychedelic trip.

STEPHEN W TAYLER
"The piano immediately caught my attention – the playing and the sound – the strange aspect of the voice, and then the choir! What was I listening to? And then it developed into the whole middle jazz section with that truly spontaneous piano performance. It felt like one of the first times for me that such a track became a real journey through changes of style and mood, arriving at a wonderful enigmatic conclusion. It's a cover of a Tim Hardin song, but a totally unique interpretation with a strange arrangement, great playing, and some very unusual and creative sound treatments.

"Keith and this track encouraged me to be much looser with my

approach to music in general, and that elements of bravery, improvisation and experimentation are crucial for great record making. The live version on the *Enigma* album is much longer and even more crazy!"

THE THREE FATES: CLOTHO/LACHESIS/ ATROPOS

ELP - Emerson, Lake & Palmer, 1970

JO QUAIL

"I was blessed with an inspiring piano teacher who introduced us to *The Three Fates*, but at that time I wasn't familiar with the term 'prog'; I classed this as 'contemporary classical', and difficult listening at that. It's only with the grace of years that I have come to truly appreciate *Clotho*, and my awe of this particular work deepens as my own creativity broadens.

"There are many aspects of *Clotho* that I return to and that inspire me; to put them broadly, it's the creative wildness of the composition, the recurring powerful motif of the bass and stacked parallel chords, the surprising change of texture/organ stop and the respite therein, and the cadence points that give weight to the storms that precede them. In the frame of (insane!) chromatic harmony and complex technical virtuosity, *Clotho* stands alone as the paragon of this realm."

KNIFE-EDGE

ELP - Emerson, Lake & Palmer, 1970

KIT WATKINS, Happy The Man

"*Knife-Edge* had a particularly dark and edgy quality that got to me. The organ was the main attraction though, since I was always salivating over distorted Hammond sounds through Leslie speakers, especially the way Emerson voiced his parts. No tremolo! Emerson was one of my early influences, especially because of how he merged rock and classical music. *Pictures At An Exhibition* was a favourite in that regard, but his technique was just so stunning and the music so evocative that I found the mix to be irresistible."

THE BARBARIAN

ELP - Emerson, Lake & Palmer, 1970

ROINE STOLT, The Flower Kings

"I remember hearing ELP's debut album in 1970. A friend of mine had the LP and we listened to it frequently, trying to understand the sounds ELP could make. I liked all of it, the skilful and powerful keyboards and the great fuzz bass sound and voice of Greg Lake on that album and Palmer's drum frenzy – somewhere in between jazz, classical and Black Sabbath.

"I was aware of Keith already from The Nice but I think the combo of this trio floored me and their more avant-garde meets classical and jazz was just so fresh. Keith's organ sounds set the standard for many others that came later, including Eddie Jobson, and surely Wakeman and Banks had their ears open. Keith was also a phenomenal pianist and pioneering Moog player – and a great showman. One of a kind."

THIRD MOVEMENT, PATHETIQUE

The Nice - Elegy, 1971

RICK PILKINGTON, The Blackheart Orchestra

"When I bought a second-hand copy of *Elegy* as a 13-year-old guitarist, I had no idea what effect it would have on me. What would I want with an album of organ music? *Elegy* is full of musical energy and ideas. It's a loaded gun that would pay homage to the past while firing rockets of possibilities into the future. Every note bursting with the 25-year-old Emerson's overflowing musical virtuosity but all the time walking a tightrope between conformity and outright musical anarchy. His recreation of Tchaikovsky's *Third Movement, Pathetique* may not be everyone's favourite Emerson moment but to me it illustrates the crazy, beautiful genius that could hardly contain the music in his young head and hands. It's a magnificent multicoloured musical explosion... In my opinion, The Nice were a starter course, maybe even more tasty than the main course that was soon to follow."

BITCHES CRYSTAL

ELP - Tarkus, 1971

NICK BEGGS

"At about the age of 13 I first heard this track. I thought the whole *Tarkus* album was great and it was on heavy rotation at my Thursday evening record club where my mates used to bring their vinyl for a spin.

"Looking at it now, it seems strange because it's just under four minutes, but packs so much into that time. It could have been a single, but Radio 1 would never have played it; the irregular metre makes it spiky. I love the dynamism of the track and the power of the trio churning up the road like a juggernaut.

"Keith's virtuosity always amazed me. Like so many others who were beguiled by his prowess, I'm sure he's influenced me on countless levels both conscious and unconsciously. Never a dull moment is a good cliché, but it's true. He took every opportunity to expand the harmonic possibilities of a performance but there's also a very economical use of tasteful single-note signature sounds thrown in as affective motifs on this track."

PROMENADE/ THE GNOME

ELP - Pictures At An Exhibition, 1971

THEO TRAVIS, Soft Machine

"I think the composition and melody are very strong and memorable. But Keith Emerson is majestic the way he plays the organ so well, plus he uses other interesting synthesiser sounds that sound like early music and then science fiction, like music of the future. He really was ahead of his time and had not just skill but such authority about his playing.

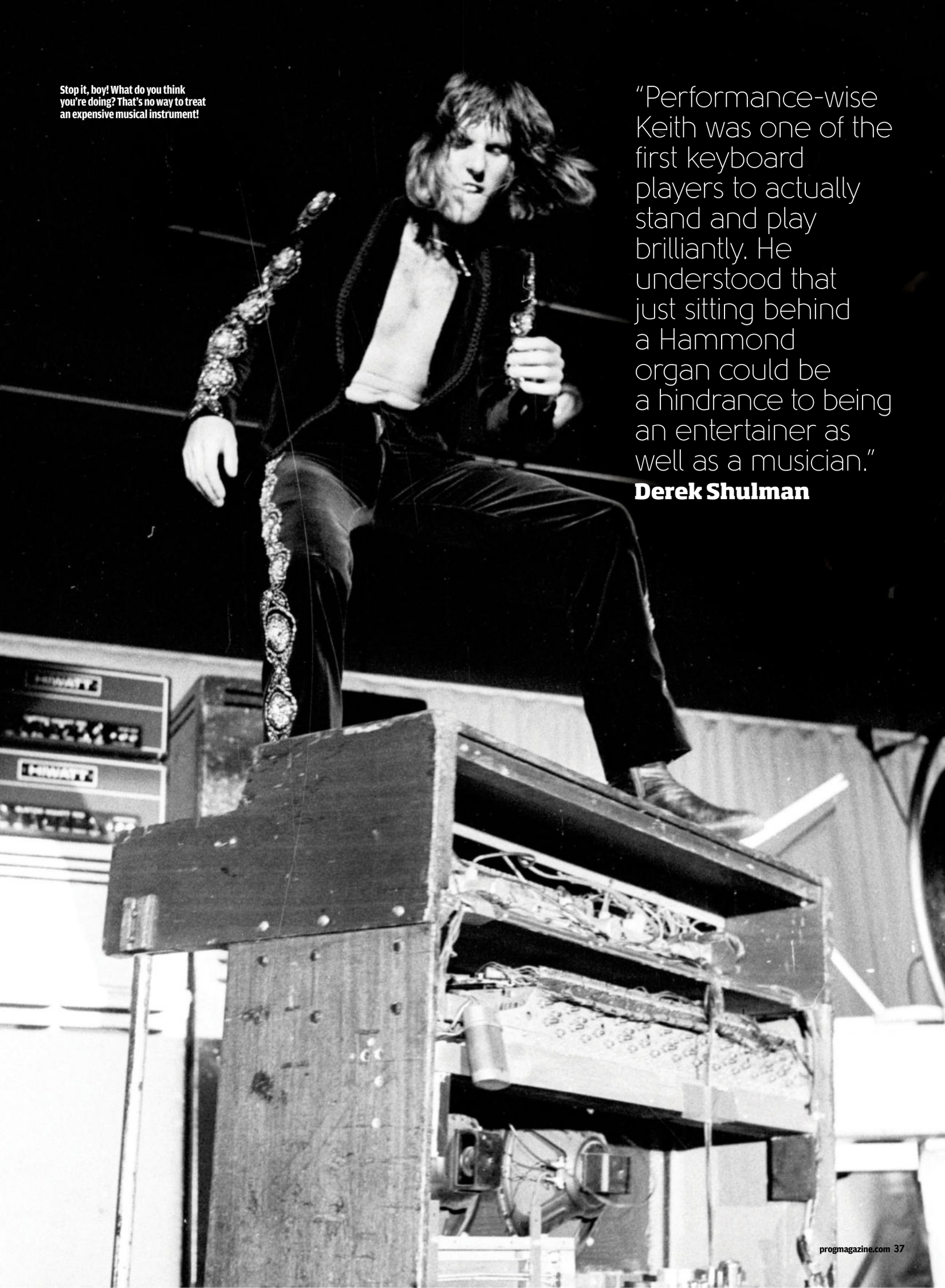
"Mussorgsky is a great composer and this is a fine work, so that aspect of the composition is already taken care of, but I love the way ELP totally own it. They add their own thing and reinvent the piece with flair, style and confidence. The arrangement is really clever – showcasing each individual performer and when they play together [they use] the instrumentation imaginatively and to the max. They were such great performers too. It's thrilling watching an old Keith Emerson performance, playing the organ upside down while having it lie over him and using knives to wedge down specific keys. He took the Hendrix thing and translated it to keyboards – very exciting. This performance on *Pictures At An Exhibition* – the playing, the atmosphere and the fact that it was so in tune with the times – contribute hugely to its magic."

NUT ROCKER

ELP - Pictures At An Exhibition, 1971

***Nut Rocker* was an arrangement of Tchaikovsky's march from *The Nutcracker* that topped the UK singles chart in 1962 for B Bumble And The Stingers, before ELP adopted it into their live repertoire.**

CHRIS FOSTER/SHUTTERSTOCK



Stop it, boy! What do you think you're doing? That's no way to treat an expensive musical instrument!

"Performance-wise Keith was one of the first keyboard players to actually stand and play brilliantly. He understood that just sitting behind a Hammond organ could be a hindrance to being an entertainer as well as a musician."
Derek Shulman

ALAN MESSER/SHUTTERSTOCK

Prog, but as rock'n'roll as they come.

RICK WAKEMAN

"It was the summer of 1962 and I heard it in Woolworths in Exmouth, Devon and used up all my holiday money to buy [the single], thus forgoing an ice cream for a day. The piece was well arranged and well played by B Bumble And The Stingers, although they were session musicians. As soon as I got home from holidaying in Exmouth with my parents, I learnt it as it was just great fun to play. In later years I wanted very much to record it, but Keith beat me to it.

"Although Keith was far more jazz-orientated than I was, and I think the best at the way he fused jazz into the various genres of music he played, we both had a lot of the same influences, such as Jimmy Smith, and we both liked fun pieces. Hence, *Hoedown* and *Nut Rocker*, both tremendous stage pieces and so well-suited to Keith's flamboyance."

TRILOGY

ELP – Trilogy, 1972

MIKE STOBBIE

"Keith was trailblazing and giving all the guitar soloists a run for their money. *Trilogy* is a keyboardist's dream; it shows off Keith's phenomenally beautiful virtuosity and his playing is second to none. Simply irresistible to listen to and I love playing it, it's stuck with me for decades.

"The song part itself has a very rich and powerful melody with Greg's wonderful voice and the beautiful classical piano playing at the beginning draws you in until it erupts into total excitement. To shoot off into that Moog synthesiser section over complicated rhythms followed by jazz-influenced distorted Hammond organ… well, it has everything I could ever want."

THE ENDLESS ENIGMA

ELP – Trilogy, 1972

JONATHAN EDWARDS, Panic Room, Luna Rossa, Three Colours Dark

"*The Endless Enigma* has all of the elements that make ELP's music so compelling: Keith's lyrical and virtuoso piano playing, particularly in the Bach-influenced *Fugue* that breaks up the two sections of the piece; the Hammond work that goes from delicate to muscular as the music demands driving the song forward; and the innovative Moog playing that features both in solo lines and as layered textures to produce synthesised fanfares in the end section. But what's striking here too is that, contrary to common opinion, it's never showy or complex for the sake of it. Every keyboard phrase, bass line or drum fill is there to support the music. For all his showmanship, Keith was first and foremost a composer and a musician, making music for the head and the heart."

ABADDON'S BOLERO

ELP – Trilogy, 1972

JAKKO JAKSZYK, King Crimson

"Having been privileged enough to remix the whole album from the original multitracks, what really impressed me all round was Keith's sense of ambition. It sounds like he's driving this and the whole album, taking them into this quasi-classical area and, of course, Keith had both the knowledge and ability to make it a reality. No disrespect to the other two members, but it sounds like Keith is, by default, upping their game as musicians. There's also something haunting about *Abaddon's Bolero* that got under my skin.

"I wouldn't say Keith had a direct influence on me as a player per se, but that sense of ambition and determination definitely did. To stand out and plough your own furrow musically and to do so with such style, originality and showmanship was pretty unique, particularly for a keyboard player that's usually pretty static."

HOEDOWN
ELP – Trilogy, 1972

LYNSEY WARD, Exploring Birdsong

"I love hearing music that feels like it was fun for the artist to track. *Hoedown* does a great job of conjuring up vivid images of people skipping around a barn in linked arms, while the less vivacious folk keep to the sides clapping along to the relentless rhythm. Here's a wonderful example of auditory scene setting and the perfect way to bridge the gap between a light-hearted track like *The Sheriff*, and the soaring epic that is the titular album track.

"The most mind-boggling thing, certainly to me, about *Hoedown* is that on many occasions it was performed live several BPM faster than the studio version. This perfectly captures Emerson's spirit as a showman, hooking the audience in as they hold their collective breath waiting for a slip on the keys that would never come.

"Keith Emerson continues to be a radiant example of a keyboard player who refused to be trapped behind their instrument. Who says organ players can't be flying, knife-wielding, leather-trouser-wearing rock stars?"

JERUSALEM
ELP – Brain Salad Surgery, 1973

ELP's take on the hymn by William Blake and Hubert Parry earned them the ire of the BBC, who banned it. Perhaps the Beeb overreacted? *Jerusalem* might be rocking, but it's surprisingly reverential.

ROBERT REED, Magenta, Cyan, Sanctuary

"I was a prog fan from an early age, but not of ELP. I bought the single of this in a shop, not knowing what it was. At this point I didn't even know that it was a hymn. For me, it showcases Keith's talent as an arranger, and his knowledge of chords. We all know he can play a million miles an hour, but this shows his skill in the choice of chords. You can tell the massive influences of the early 20th-century American classical composers, like Aaron Copland. Bands like Yes and Pink Floyd were more rock'n'roll in their chord harmonies.

"I think all keyboard players in the prog world can't help but be influenced by his playing and stage performances. It proved that you could have a band without a guitarist, which I did for a while. Technically though, I think Keith was way beyond all his contemporaries. Amazing player."

> "Keith's composing and playing imprinted on me hard at that time, and the influence remains – every time I play a sequence of fourths on a keyboard, I can feel him hovering nearby."
>
> **Mike Keneally**

KARN EVIL 9
ELP – Brain Salad Surgery, 1973

ANDY TILLISON, The Tangent

"I first heard it aged 13 — half a century ago — while already a piano player and prog fan. I was staggered by its construction, the sound palette, the counterpoint, the engagement which each part had with the others and Keith's ability to multitask with left and right hands — almost impossibly. I have often mentioned that, in all honesty, many pieces I composed myself came about as failed attempts to teach myself to play *Karn Evil 9*, which to this day I have not got close to being able to achieve. The ideas contained within it can spark myriad others.

"Keith Emerson was a multifaceted personality, and you could never decide whether he was the traditional classical composer, a rock star, a boogie-woogie man or some kind of circus stunt pianist. Those different sides would often create uneven albums, but in *Karn Evil 9* somehow everything this man could do came together in a glorious swirl of creativity that positively sparked with energy and vitality."

FANFARE FOR THE COMMON MAN
ELP – Works Volume 1, 1977

After tackling Aaron Copland's *Hoedown* on the *Trilogy* album, Emerson returned to the American composer's work five years later.

MARK KELLY, Marillion

"I first heard *Fanfare For The Common Man* on *Top Of The Pops*. I had only been playing keyboards for a few years and was very excited to see Emerson, Lake & Palmer, not your usual pop pap, on the BBC's weekly chart show. I remember they were playing in a huge empty stadium wearing big furry jackets: very prog, very 70s, but what really got my attention was Keith Emerson's keyboard, a Yamaha GX-1. This was a cutting-edge instrument costing more than a three-bed semi and it sounded amazing. The rich brass sounds Keith got out of it were perfectly suited to this rock reworking of Aaron Copland's tune.

"I had the pleasure of meeting Keith after a Marillion gig at the Marquee Club. I was glad I didn't find out until after the gig that this colossus of the keyboards was watching us. I didn't see him again until 35 years later when he came to see us play in LA. Both times he was a total gent and a lovely man."

PIANO CONCERTO NO.1
ELP – Works Volume 1, 1977

NIKKI FRANCIS, EBB

"The first time I heard ELP was as a teenager on a work experience placement at my local music shop. There I met soon-to-be fellow bandmate Kitty Biscuits for the first time. She walked in and immediately introduced herself as a 'Major ELP enthusiast'. She introduced me to *Brain Salad Surgery*, which sent me down the deep gravity well of ELP and Keith Emerson appreciation.

"Throughout *Piano Concerto No.1* you can hear influences of Vaughan Williams, Gershwin, and to my ears Holst (*Mars, The Planets Suite*) in the third movement. But this concerto is unique and you're listening to Emerson demonstrating his musicianship in arguably the most demanding genre. Every listen I find something new.

"I'm unlikely to get within a light year of his technical abilities as a player but there's much more to admire about his musicianship than that. It strikes me that he never set out to please or comfort, and as a result, we often end up with Emerson's brilliant musical mind at its best; unfiltered and uncensored. Utterly inspirational. For that, I think we can forgive the physical abuse of a few beautiful Hammond L-100s."

A CAT ATTIC ATTACK
Inferno – Original Motion Picture Soundtrack, 1980

RACHEL FLOWERS

"Having listened to Keith's *Piano Concerto No.1* from the first *Works* album, I wanted to check out what

BRIAN RASIC/GETTY IMAGES

We bet they all went up to 11: Performing at London's Royal Festival Hall, October 7, 2002.

else he did with an orchestra. The score to *Inferno* has a lot of thematic rhythms, which are first demonstrated in the opening title. While the main title has a lighter, dreamy tone, the rest of the score takes the same idea toward a darker place. My personal favourite example comes from *A Cat Attic Attack*: starting with piano and strings, the music gradually picks up speed, until a call-and-response section happens between the piano and brass. After a brief pause, there's a dreamy variation on the main title, thinking that the music is coming to an end. However, it hits me with a surprise, as the strings play fast runs, and Keith's piano goes wild with low notes. The reverb builds, until a Wagnerian-style brass and string ensemble completes the piece.

"If you're not familiar with this score, I think you'll be surprised at the musical explorations Keith tried out. While it's different from a melodic John Williams-style piece of music, Keith's fascination with complex harmonies and rhythm is unusual for a soundtrack. I wish film scores would return to this style of music again."

THE DREAMER (LOVE THEME)

Best Revenge – Original Motion Picture Soundtrack, 1985

The 1984 thriller *Best Revenge* has long been forgotten, but Emerson's soundtrack produced this beautiful piano piece that would later reappear on both 2002's *Emerson Plays Emerson* and *Beyond The Stars* in 2018. But before those two albums, the song became a staple part of evenings at home with his children, Aaron and Damon, passing the music onto the next generation.

AARON EMERSON

"Dad's upright Baby Grand Steinway would sit outside Damon and my bedrooms so we would regularly hear him playing that song, usually at bedtime, but also my son Ethan played it at the Birmingham Symphony Hall, which was very emotional, and on the album *Beyond The Stars*."

THE MIRACLE

Emerson Lake & Powell – Emerson Lake & Powell, 1986

JEM GODFREY, Frost*

"I heard it in Charing Cross Hospital, where I was having a kidney out. It took my mind off the whole thing rather nicely over the following two weeks while I recovered in the ward. It was this juggernaut of sound that was both spacious and yet massive at the same time. I was really into Genesis, so Keith's playing was a complete revelation in contrast to Tony Banks' more ecclesiastical style – all this massive brass stuff and raging Hammond B3 soloing, full of enthusiasm and a huge sense of fun. The melodies are just fantastic.

"I know this version of ELP isn't the one that most people like, but it was the 80s and it totally worked for me. The album starts with *The Score*, which is full-on ELP: lots of references to their past work, Aaron Copland-style brass arrangements and the GX-1 screaming its head off. Keith is in his full, wonderful pomp, then it segues into this meaner and moodier track so it's a 17-minute onslaught of stadium-sized rock that was 1,000 miles away from Phil Collins dressed like a twee little fisherman singing *Trick Of The Tail*. I thought it was completely fucking marvellous!"

DESDE LA VIDA

3 – ...To The Power Of Three, 1988

Emerson and Carl Palmer reunited in a new supergroup with guitarist Robert Berry. While the 3 project only lasted for one album, Berry and Emerson subsequently formed a duo under the name 3.2.

ROBERT BERRY

"I remember the first time I heard what was to become *Desde La Vida* vividly. It was during rehearsals in Keith's barn, filled with musical wonders like broken Kurzweil keyboards, old Korg synths,

the GX-1, and the latest in keyboard technology. Keith had an idea for a song, and as he played it, he mentioned that he hoped that vocals could fit in. I suggested writing lyrics in Spanish, inspired by Carl's fascination with Spain. Little did I know this would become one of our most iconic pieces.

"Keith Emerson and this song have had a profound influence on me as an artist and as a person. He did more for my standing in the music business than anyone in this industry. Playing with Keith opened countless doors, and our friendship and musical partnership spanned over 27 years, including our most recent collaboration on 3.2's *The Rules Have Changed*. Losing him during its completion was a shock, but the response to the album was stunning. I miss him on every level: as a fan, a friend, a musical partner and an inspiration."

ROMEO AND JULIET
ELP – Black Moon, 1992

ARJEN LUCASSEN
"I've been a huge ELP fan ever since I heard their very first album, back in 1970. I was 10 years old at the time and I bought all the following albums. However, after the disappointing *Works* and *Love Beach* I had basically given up on ELP. Nevertheless, I decided to give their comeback album, *Black Moon*, a chance anyway, and I remember the huge smile on my face when I heard their version of Prokofiev's *Romeo And Juliet*.

"Usually with ELP I love the combination of Greg Lake's big melodic voice and the technical prowess of Keith Emerson and Carl Palmer, but surprisingly I don't miss the vocals in this track. I love the bombastic feel and the way the song builds. Climax upon climax! Should be played loud… obviously."

CLOSE TO HOME
ELP – Black Moon, 1992

JOHN MITCHELL, Arena, Frost*, Lonely Robot
"I asked our Amazon ally Alexa to curate a relaxing classical piano playlist for me one afternoon while reading in the garden and, lo and behold, this beautiful wonderment suddenly danced upon my ear.

"*Close To Home* is a confusingly simple piece to begin with, with a fairly straight and figured chordal arrangement belying a classical baroque tradition before catching your ear with deft and unexpected modulation into familial relative keys, only later giving way to greater flourishes and cluster chords. It's a trick I adore in music, and one often played on me by other great artists as diverse as Ryuichi Sakamoto, Nik Kershaw and John Barry. It's not what you expect that draws one in, quite the opposite. It's also a trick to modulate between keys so effortlessly and matter-of-factly that makes Keith Emerson such an engaging and brilliant musician. It's all too easy to latch onto technical prowess and musical machismo, but more impressive is the intelligence behind something seemingly superficially simple and beautiful that belies such hidden depth."

BROKEN BOUGH
Keith Emerson – Emerson Plays Emerson, 2002

GLEB KOLYADIN, Iamthemorning
"It may not be the most obvious choice, as for many Keith Emerson is more associated with explosive energy and musical unbridledness, but for me, in this brief sketch I sense much more inner exploration and conflict. There are no familiar virtuosic passages, but there's a feeling of breaking away from the usual harmonic structure used in rock albums; there's even a hint of Bartók and Janáček sonatas, but all in a compact form, maintaining a sense of concise and poetic incompleteness. I remember stumbling upon these miniatures, such as *Solitudinous* and *Vagrant*, from his piano album completely by chance. Some of them truly splendidly blend jazz and contemporary classical music, which may not be understandable and relatable to everyone, but personally, it's very inspiring for me."

TARKUS
Keith Emerson, Marc Bonilla, Terje Mikkelsen With The Münchner Rundfunkorchester – The Three Fates Project, 2012

MARC BONILLA
"Keith and I were like two kids in a candy store with all the musical possibilities of a rock band and full orchestra in front of us. No restrictions and no experiment too crazy not to have its day in court. And under Terje's direction, we renewed a beloved classic.

"*The Three Fates* version of *Tarkus* truly integrates the orchestra with the rock band. In most instances it's either a rock band upfront being chased by the orchestra or an orchestra upfront with a shadow of a rock band behind it. With *Tarkus*, Keith and I endeavoured to make moments within the piece that highlighted at times just the orchestra, at times just the band, and at times an encompassing hybrid of both worlds whose sum was greater than its collective parts.

"Working with Keith was an endless lesson in all things musical. He demonstrated what real work ethics were all about, how not to fear anything, to take chances to increase the likelihood of the element of surprise, how melody and arrangement will always be king, how to always be a servant of the music, and to always steer into the skid."

> "I've played with some of the top soloists in the world and when they hear I worked with Keith Emerson, [they say] 'Oh! He's the reason I started to like classical music!'"
>
> **Terje Mikkelsen**

MALAMBO
Keith Emerson, Marc Bonilla, Terje Mikkelsen With The Münchner Rundfunkorchester – The Three Fates Project, 2012

TERJE MIKKELSEN
"Working with Keith was pleasantly gratifying because he was very knowledgeable about classical music. Before we recorded in Munich, we had four full days of practice at Marc's home in LA with the entire band. Together we really scrutinised the music, so when we arrived at the studio for the first day of rehearsal, the musicians in the orchestra were stunned by how well-prepared we were. Everything was fine-tuned to the smallest detail.

"The musicians in Munich all knew about Keith and had the greatest respect for him, which made him feel extremely welcome. This was a live performance with no click tracks; the tempos change like they do with a normal symphony recording or classical piece. It breathes and is alive and that's what Keith loved the most. When we were immersed in the orchestral environment, he finally felt like this was his home."

The 20-disc Keith Emerson — Variations box set is out now via Spirit Of Unicorn Music. See www.facebook.com/officialkeithemerson for more information.

POPPODIUMBOERDERIJ.NL

27 OKT **RPWL & SYLVAN**
DOUBLE HEADLINER

28 OKT **THE FLOWER KINGS**

04 NOV **DAMIAN WILSON**
ONE KNIGHT ONLY

17 NOV **DELAIN**
BEYOND DARK WATERS
+ SUPPORT XANDRIA

01 DEC **RAY WILSON**

09 DEC **IQ**
X-MAS BASH

16 DEC **MOSTLY AUTUMN**

30 DEC **PROGPROMS 2023**
THE BEST OF
PROGRESSIVE ROCK
FEAT. DAMIAN WILSON

10 MRT **SAGA**

16 MRT **CLOUDBUSTING**
40 YEARS OF KATE BUSH

30 MRT **SOLCTICE**
+ SUPPORT EBONY BUCKLE

18 MEI **PENDRAGON**

25 MEI **RANESTRANE**
CINEMATIC SHOWS TOUR

POPPODIUM
BOERDERIJ

AMERIKAWEG 145 ZOETERMEER
THE NETHERLANDS INFO@BOERDERIJ.ORG

ROCKET RECORDINGS

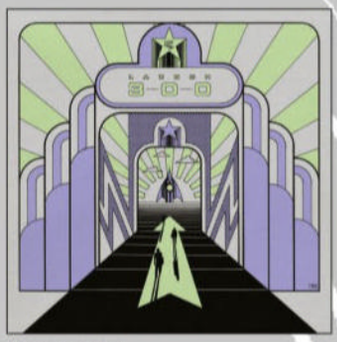
ESSENTIAL NEW RELEASES

GOAT
MEDICINE

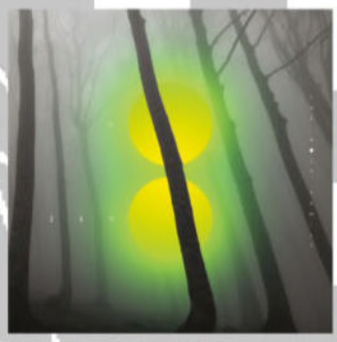
TEETH OF THE SEA
HIVE

BONNACONS OF DOOM
SIGNS

MOUNDABOUT
AN CNOC MÓR



VARIOUS
LAUNCH300



THE HOLY FAMILY
GO ZERO

ROCKET
1998 2023

No Signal
DISTORTED REALITY
THE HIGHLY CONCEPTUAL 77-MINUTE, 16 SONG SOPHOMORE
LP IS AVAILABLE NOW ON ALL STREAMING PLATFORMS
SCAN CODE WITH CAMERA PHONE TO LISTEN
Distorted Reality
No Signal

THE ULTIMATE BOX SET EDITION OF
THE PROG/AVANT-GARDE ROCK MILESTONE!
MAGMA
UNE HISTOIRE DE MEKANÏK
50 YEARS OF MEKANÏK DESTRUKTÏW KOMMANDÖH
HARDCOVER BOX | 7 LPS | POLYLINED INNER SLEEVES | HARDCOVER BOOK (LARGE FORMAT, 84 PAGES)
WALL FLAG | ART PRINT | HAND-NUMBERED CERTIFICATE | 2.000 COPIES AVAILABLE
OUT NOW (LABEL WEBSHOP) AND 3 NOVEMBER 2023 (RETAIL)!
prophecy
SHOP AT: WWW.PROPHECY.DE
/PROPHECYPRODUCTIONS
/PROPHECYBC
/PROPHECYPRO

Steven Wilson is focused on making music that's outside defined genres.

"For the first time it feels like I'm at the forefront of something that's changing."

Music For The Head

After a short pause, **Steven Wilson** is back with his unexpected seventh solo record, *The Harmony Codex*. Across 10 new tracks, the musician-turned-producer harnesses the very latest in cutting-edge technology to make an audiophile's must-have album of the year and his most progressive release yet. *Prog* finds out more about the journey that led to its organic creation.

Words: Dave Everley **Images:** Hajo Mueller

Steven Wilson has heard the future, and it sounds incredible.

"Over the next three to five years, we're going to see a massive change in how records sound and how people listen to them," he says. "The developments in audio are incredible right now. Atmos and spatial audio is going to succeed where things like quadraphonic did not, because the technology is there and it's relatively affordable. You can have a soundbar or a pair of binaural headphones and you can listen to spatial audio. For the first time it feels like I'm at the forefront of something that's changing."

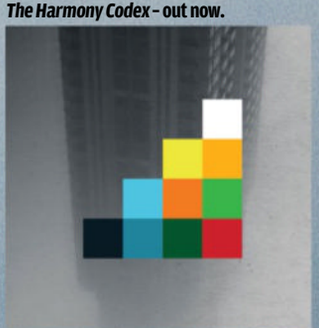
It's a sunny morning in late August, and we're sitting opposite each other on wicker sofas in the back garden of Wilson's north London home while his two small rescue dogs run around our feet. Wilson moved here with his family before the pandemic, and spent much of the next two-and-a-half years working on his seventh solo album, *The Harmony Codex*, which is the jumping-off point for his impassioned speech.

Talking multi-channels and waveforms isn't usually the stuff that great interviews are made of, but this is different. *The Harmony Codex* is a shape-shifting, darkly dreamlike album, one that forgoes Wilson's normal approach of staying on one set of musical rails and switches between electronic prog and crepuscular jazz to pop-adjacent piano balladry and even a warped take on hip hop over the course of its 10 songs.

But that's not the most fascinating thing about *The Harmony Codex*. What sets it apart from his past albums — and pretty much any other album you'll hear this year — is what it sounds like. The sometime Porcupine Tree frontman has poured all the experience and expertise he's built up from remixing other artists' classic records in Atmos and spatial audio into his own.

"I've learned from mistakes I've made as I've gone along," he says, "and I've taken everything that was successful and put it into this record. I felt this is absolutely the time to make this album."

***The Harmony Codex* – out now.**



A week before we meet, his label holds a series of playbacks at the London HQ of super-high-end speaker manufacturers L-Acoustics. Sitting in a pitch-black room, surrounded by 18 giant wall speakers and three more embedded in the ceiling, the spatial audio version of

The future still bites...

The Harmony Codex does indeed sound like nothing else. Where Wilson's work on other people's records was bound by the materials he was given, this was clearly and meticulously built from the ground up. Songs wash around the room, individual parts disconnecting and reconnecting in a grand ballet. Instruments and vocals give the illusion of being everywhere at once. Details, whether it's the glitchy beats and keening backing vocals of graceful first single *Economies Of Scale* or the rain that concludes final track *Staircase*, are rendered in vivid, pinprick detail.

It's hugely impressive yet distracting at the same time: not so much a work of art as a work of architecture, one whose impressive scale and sonic ambition is a kind of misdirection, pulling the attention away from the songs themselves. On first listen, at least, *The Harmony Codex* is easier to admire than it is to love.

"The albums I ended up loving the most were the ones where I wasn't sure what I was listening to in the first place and if I even liked it or not," says Wilson a week later, sitting in his garden. "But there was something about those albums that made me curious to go back to them two, three, four times. There's something great about music that's beyond easy description or categorisation."

That's precisely what Wilson says he was shooting for with *The Harmony Codex*.

"My aim with this record, and generally, is to try and make music that exists outside of any notion of genre. I'm fed up with generic music. We're at the point where some genres have such a specific set of rules that AI can make it very easily. When we get to the point where artificial intelligence is able to replicate music by the yard, something is wrong."

It's ironic he says this, because his own solo albums to this point have all had their self-imposed parameters: the left-field alternative rock of *Insurgentes*, the old-school prog feel of *The Raven That Refused To Sing*, the robots-dancing-on-a-production-line approach of 2021's *The Future Bites*.

"No, this is one of the first times I've not had an agenda to start with," he says. "I just wanted to let the music flow. I think that's why it's all over the shop, in the best way."

He started working on the album at the beginning of the pandemic.

"I loved it," he says of the enforced isolation that came with those initial lockdowns. "After six months, this creeping sense of dread began to come up, and then it became less appealing. But until then I fucking loved it."

At the same time he began writing his autobiography, *Limited Edition Of One*. The book would feed into the record and vice versa, most notably via the short story that concluded it and gave the album its title: *The Harmony Codex*. A piece of unsettling fiction centred around two characters — Jamie and his sister Harmony — as they try to escape a nameless skyscraper via a seemingly never-ending staircase, it shares a surreal, inscrutable internal logic with the album. Both are, Wilson says, about the journey rather than arriving at any specific destination.

"What could be a more universal theme than the idea of the journey being the important thing? I like the idea that people won't be able to catch hold of what *The Harmony Codex* is about — if it's even about anything. You can look for explanation, you can look for logic, but it's not there. To me, the narrative is in the music, not the lyrics or the storytelling. There's a very considered flow and shape to the way the album unfolds, but it's all in the music."

The pandemic shaped the album in different ways, both directly and indirectly. Unable to hole up in a studio with a regular band, he opted for a mix-and-match approach. Some songs, such as *Economies Of Scale*, are the work of Wilson alone. Others feature what he calls "a bespoke line-up" — he estimates that *Impossible Tightrope* is the work of 10 different people. There are some familiar names in the record's cast list, including semi-regular collaborators Craig Blundell, Adam Holzman and Israeli singer Ninet Tayeb, alongside a few curveballs, among them Jack Dangers of EBM veterans Meat Beat Manifesto, Interpol drummer Sam Fogarino, and the Manic Street Preachers (the latter remixed *Economies Of Scale* on the bonus disc that accompanies *The Harmony Codex*, itself a total reimagining of the original record).

The hermetic nature of the album's creation lends it a much more insular feel than *The Future Bites*, which turned its gaze on society, technology and humanity. "It became more indulgent, which I don't find to be a negative thing," says Wilson. "It's based on a story that a lot of people won't have read, but that's why I love music above all other art forms — it demands more of the person experiencing it than, say, a movie, where you generally know what the characters are thinking."

By that definition, *The Harmony Codex* is no more or less indulgent than any previous Wilson album, where he's followed no vision other than his own. If it is indulgent, it's in the way it places the ambition and detail of its sound above actual songs — there's little to initially grab hold of beyond its admittedly impressive sonic architecture.

"You're not the first person to say, 'I was very disconcerted by that, I didn't really understand what I was listening to,'" he says. "I remember having the same reaction myself listening to Giles Martin's mix of *Abbey Road*: 'This is weird, all the glue was gone from the music.' But when I started working on it, I thought, 'Okay, this is my chance to really

"There's something great about music that's beyond easy description or categorisation."

raise the bar, set the benchmark for spatial audio in the way that *The Dark Side Of The Moon* set a benchmark for stereo."

But listening to it, being immersed in this amazing sound and hearing all the different pieces moving within each song, isn't disconcerting — it's distracting. It takes away from the songs themselves. It feels like the music is written as a vehicle for the sound.

"Oh no. The songs always come first."

But where's the human heart within it? It's hard to find it. Wilson looks surprised.

"*What Life Brings*?" he says, referring to the album's fluid, guitar-led second track: "'*Love it all, and hold it in your hands*'? Yes, the lyrics are ambiguous in places, but they're so simple in other places." He pauses. "Is it a cold album? You're making me worried now."

It's not cold, though it is hard to connect with, especially listening to it on a set-up that most people couldn't dream of affording.

"My answer to that is that I've worked hard on the stereo mix. I understand that hardly anyone has a spatial audio system in their front room. It's not like I've geared everything towards the spatial mix."

He's not upset or defensive when he says this, just slightly disconcerted that we're hearing the album differently. We talk a while longer, about everything from his excitement at developments in Atmos and spatial audio technologies ("Apple and Spotify are on board, this is the future!") to the idea of forgoing traditional touring in favour of week-long residencies in venues with state-of-the-art sound systems. We talk about what he's working on right now (a new Bass Communion album, the first proper one in 12 years) and the future of Porcupine Tree after their surprise reunion ("No plans, but I'm not going to say we're never going to do it again."). Then it's time to say goodbye and leave Wilson to his family and his dogs.

It takes a few days and several more spins of the record — on humble stereo headphones — for the penny to drop. Wilson is right: *The Harmony Codex*, like so many of the albums that inspired him, gives up its secrets gradually rather than instantly. That human heart is there in the melancholy sweep of *Rock Bottom* and the almost childlike-references to Kate Bush's *The Kick Inside* and Jeff Wayne's *War Of The Worlds* in *Time Is Running Out* and the gentle spoken-word vocal by Wilson's wife Rotem on the coruscating title track. While it's the album's game-changing sonic architecture rather than its music that truly gives *The Harmony Codex* its progressive edge, there's humanity beating at the centre of it.

During our conversation in his back garden, Wilson had touched on the meaning of the word 'codex' in its title. The word refers to an old manuscript, a forerunner of the modern book, but there's another meaning.

"For me, a codex is something to be solved, a puzzle," he'd said. "There's something there to be figured out and understood. Except you need to make up your own mind. I don't know the answer either, and I like that fact."

The Harmony Codex is out now via Virgin/SW Records. See www.stevenwilsonhq.com for more.

Solving the puzzle that lies at the heart of *The Harmony Codex*.

An Extraordinary Life

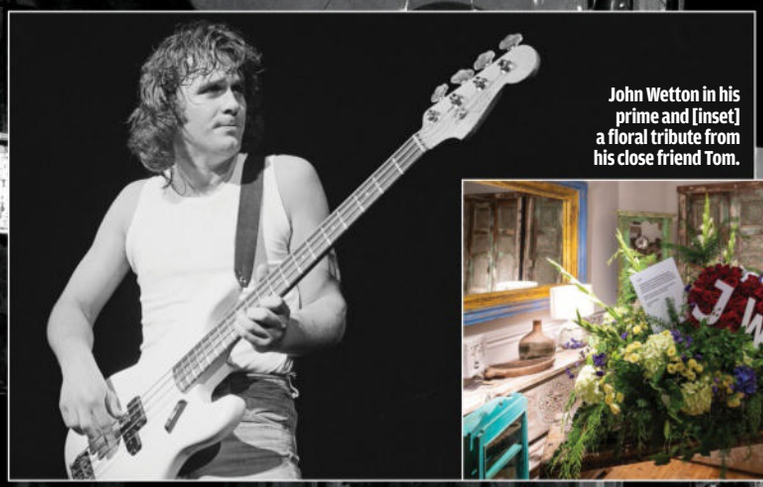
"It's extraordinary to be in a room with all my musical heroes, I can't believe it," says a visibly gobsmacked Michael Clifford, owner of Trading Boundaries, the East Sussex furniture emporium-cum-prog sanctum, from the stage.

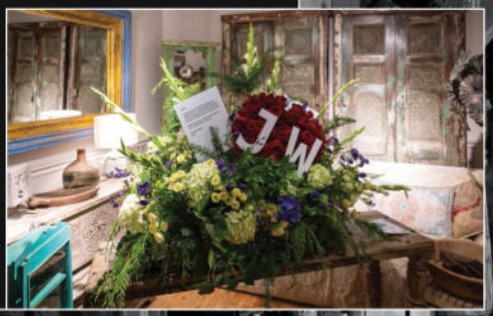
What's about to take place *is* almost unbelievable. In just four months a live event billed as 'John Wetton: An Extraordinary Life' — the same title as a new biography and forthcoming box set — complete with a star-studded line-up to make any prog fan hyperventilate, has been created in Wetton's honour. Wetton played here in January 2012 supporting his friend, and Asia artist, Roger Dean's Focus X event. Roger now has a gallery here.

When John passed away from colon cancer in 2017, aged just 67, he left a vast catalogue of music made with Family, King Crimson, Roxy Music, Uriah Heep, Wishbone Ash and Asia as well as his own solo work and many collaborations. A commemoration idea snowballed following a proposal by Paul Green, founder of the Paul Green Rock Academy, formerly the School Of Rock, for multi-instrumentalists aged 10 to 18. Founded in 2002, most recently the PGRA has provided Jon Anderson with his touring ensemble, but in the 2000s John Wetton was a professor and performer with the Academy, spotlighting songs from his prog canon.

Since John's passing, his widow Lisa has kept in touch with the PGRA, booking them for US prog event RoSFest in 2022. In April this year, Paul and Lisa spoke about the students playing Trading Boundaries with Anderson as part of their current European tour, "but Paul suggested doing small tribute show for John, with a handful of special guests. We thought it could be a fundraiser for Macmillan Caring Locally, who helped look after John," Lisa tells *Prog*. "Well, I knew what I was getting into [laughs]. I had to ask John's management, QEDG, to be involved. Then all hell broke loose as people started coming forward to be part of it."

Today — on a rare gloriously sunny day this British summer ("John shining a light on us," Geoff Downes says) — the "small tribute show" is an epic,





John Wetton in his prime and [inset] a floral tribute from his close friend Tom.

“John was the edifice that kept British rock going. Tonight is for him.”

Steve Hackett

livestreamed *This Is Your Life/Live Aid* for the bassist, vocalist and songwriter, a grand pulling-together by all Trading Boundaries staff, the QEDG team, the Truly Live streaming company and the technical production crew. The venue is buzzing, filled with friends of John, his wife Lisa and his son Dylan. Keith Emerson’s family are here, and Regina Lake, wife of the late ELP and Crimson bassist-vocalist Greg. Seated with Lisa are former Genesis tour manager Richard Macphail and Plane Groovy label boss Chris Topham and his wife Catrina. Other faces include Diane Fox from The Paradox Twin, US promoting legend Danny Zelisko and assorted record company VIPs. There’s a beautiful flower arrangement in the entrance hall sent by John’s great friend Tom, who can’t be here, and many seek out the original artwork for Asia’s *Alpha* on show nearby.

The backstage area — usually a sales point for candles and homewares — has numerous mingling musicians, and rows of guitars and other gear tuned and ready for fast changeovers — “It’s like a war room!” observes Geoff Downes. Up a flight of stairs, Roger’s art space is now the Green Room, where war stories and outrageous anecdotes are being swapped.

With the livestream just launched online, Rick Wakeman opens the celebration by playing *Life On Mars* and a Prokoviev’d-up *Eleanor Rigby*. Rick and John almost formed new groups several times, and his track choices reflected “a song that John loved, and as we’re down in Sussex, we’ll do the old McCartney thing.” As Renaissance’s Annie Haslam presses some signed CDs into his hand, he tells *Prog* why this gig’s been so important: “We were such good friends. And if the boot was on the other foot he’d have been here for me.”

Dave Kilminster, Jakko Jakszyk, Mel Collins and David Cross get up to some Crimsonesque shenanigans.

Lisa Wetton and Renaissance vocalist Annie Haslam.

The Asia “All-Stars” with YouTuber Harry Whitley up front.

Coinciding with a new biography, *An Extraordinary Life*, on August 3 a commemoration of the music and legacy of the much-missed **John Wetton** rapidly grew from a small-scale live idea into a gigantic, star-packed five-hour celebration that was streamed across the globe. *Prog* grabbed a golden ticket to attend the once-in-a-lifetime event at Trading Boundaries in the Sussex countryside, a night when (rock) stars truly aligned.

Words: Jo Kendall **Images:** Kevin Nixon

Editor Jerry Ewing is our gregarious MC for the night. Slipping on something comme il faut — a black floral dress jacket styled over a *Prog* tee (natch) — his look is in accord with the students' own rock'n'roll stagewear. Standing next to PGRA-ers Luke and Jeff, we're agog at the wall of stage plans in the back room. These young players and their peers will underpin the five-hour event, 30 students forming various backing groups, later playing *Woman*, *Ride Easy* and *Voice Of America* on their own.

"John did two tours with Asia [in the US] and if he had a day off and there was a School Of Rock nearby he'd stop by and say hello to the kids," Paul Green tells the audience. "He was a true angel to myself and [to them]." An extended King Crimson segment follows, with a refreshing, female-led take on some vocals. "*Easy Money* I'm falling in love with afresh," David Cross tells *Prog* after performing. "It's a real treasure, something to do with John's delivery of the song which I've only started paying attention to since taking *Larks' Tongues*... out on the road myself. It's really nice hearing women sing his stuff."

He continues: "It's important to remember John, and Macmillan. This hasn't been a great year for me... I lost my wife Chiemi to cancer in October; she was too young. The hospice was very important to us."

Out back, Dave Kilminster relives his shredding of *Red* and admits he was "mildly terrified". The former member of John's short-lived Qango project — later guesting with iCon — says, "I've had a weird stomach all day and I've got *Starless* coming up later," he gulps. "I don't know why I put myself through it... but I'm glad I have, for John."

Out by the armoires and parasols, John Mitchell is apprehensive — he'll be on stage with Martin Orford for two UK numbers and will play guitar for a headlining Asia set. "I became a fan of John from the second Asia album," he says. "Incredibly I joined his band, and we became good friends. He encouraged me to sing; I was reluctant. I loved John very much and he gave me so much in my life. I had to be here."

Prog Editor and tonight's MC, Jerry Ewing.

Top left: Phil Manzanera and Chris Difford catch up in front of the detailed plan of the evening's entertainment. Above left: surprise guest Bill Bruford. Above right: Steve Hackett rehearses with some of the Rock Academy students.

Family's Roger Chapman relaxes before showtime.

The set goes over tremendously — student Kylan's Holdsworth runs prompt many nods of approval — then, prefacing a solo version of *Rendezvous 6:02*, Martin recounts, "Seeing UK was my first-ever gig. I wanted to be in a band... be careful what you wish for!"

Absent friends have sent in video messages — Steve Howe, Carl Palmer and Martin Turner — then Steve Hackett is up, with young YouTuber singer-multi-instrumentalist Harry Whitley (more from him later). They give *All Along The Watchtower* some psychedelic welly before a hymn-like *Afterglow*, again with student female vocals. Steve's friendship with John dates back to taking his Genesis bandmates to see King Crimson live in 1973, then bumping into John at notorious celeb hangout The Speakeasy afterwards. "We became pals immediately," he says. "John was in the running when Peter left Genesis, but it didn't work out... Years later John did *Afterglow* for me on *Genesis Revisited 2*. We did ...*Watchtower* because I knew he loved that song so much.

"John was the edifice that kept British rock going," he adds, smiling. "Tonight is for him, and for Lisa."

During another interval, *Prog* bumps into Phil Manzanera on the terrace. "I loved John's work with Family," he says. "Out of 13 bass players he was the only one Roxy Music considered making a full partner — but then he went heavy metal with Uriah Heep [laughs]." Has there been a favourite moment of the night for him so far? "This! Gotta go!" he says, as *Burlesque* fires up, and we run back inside.

There's surely a lot of grooving going on — we saw ya, Guy Pratt! — as Roger Chapman, Jim Cregan and Laurie Wisefield manoeuvre an effortless twofer, with a sublime *My Friend The Sun* to close. Jim met John in his hometown of Bournemouth, aged 16, got him the job in Family and later replaced the man he remembers as a "sweetheart, and a great loss".

"John and I were great friends. We'd go out and party..." Roger tells us, before Richard Macphail appears, enthusiastically shaking his hand and telling him that he was an inspiration to Peter Gabriel. "Oh, I know that!" Roger laughs, and then Richard says he was mistaken for Roger earlier.

Just when you think the setlist can't get any better, here's Phil, Guy Pratt, Chris Difford from Squeeze and Bill Bruford — out of retirement! — for a rollicking *Let's Stick Together*. Bill's spent much of the evening chatting to a sofa-full of student percussionists.

"You've got some competition," says *Prog*. "Absolutely – if I keel over, we're in safe hands," he says. He adds that he always knew that he and John "were on the same team – he knew who Herbie Hancock was, for a start," and has relished playing something unexpected. "It's nice when musicians play other people's songs out of context – I couldn't have done this with Yes."

"We got away with it, Bill, and no one was hurt!" cries Guy Pratt from across the room. *Let's Stick Together* was the first song Guy learned on bass. Chris Difford looks at the song from the angle of recovery from alcohol abuse. He feels that "*Let's Stick Together* means a lot, that's where I come from."

John's issues with addiction are well-known. Breaking off from conversation with Steve and Jo Hackett, Annie Haslam recalls meeting John after he joined Renaissance's live band in 1971, and they remained in touch over the years. Annie sang *In The End* for his 2005 *iCon* album, which she'll reprise tonight. "John's voice was a little tired at that time, but it came out beautiful," she says. "I was told of his situation with alcohol, so I flew over to see him, got him into rehab."

Harry Whitley is back for this Asia All-Stars section – with a nervous Geoff Downes ("I've not played Asia tracks for a while, I had to make sure it was right," he tells us) plus Yes' Billy Sherwood, Jay Schellan and John Mitchell – and the 28-year-old is ably rising to the challenge. Post-lockdown he uploaded videos of Asia covers and he caught the attention of Geoff, who calls him "our secret weapon". "I'm just a lucky fan," he says. A lucky fan who delivered Dylan Wetton's favourite moment: "*An Extraordinary Life*. Annie Haslam put her hand on my shoulder for the whole song," he says, "Dad was present all night, but especially then."

"I loved John's work with Family. Out of 13 bass players he was the only one Roxy Music considered making a full partner."
Phil Manzanera

Below: Asia take the final applause. Right: Geoff Downes and Harry Whitley earning it.

Jay Schellan had two standouts from this set as well: "*Rubicon* was powerful, but the sound of the audience after *Sole Survivor*..."

Modesty is also Jakko Jakszyk's speciality. He tells *Prog* of "being in the crowd of Watford Town Hall, watching Crimson as a teenager" and always "having a sense of respect, responsibility and wanting to do John proud," when singing *Starless* with the most recent iteration of Crimson. It's tonight's penultimate song, augmented by Mel Collins' wild sax, and superb drums and bass from students Harry and Christian. "Mel was so sweet to me," says Harry. "I told him I was nervous, and he said, 'So am I.'"

This extraordinary show can only end with one track: Asia's *The Heat Of The Moment*, and a mass singalong.

"You could feel John's spirit running through this gathering," nods Billy Sherwood, John's long-time friend and *Raised In Captivity* co-writer. "Like me aged 12, getting into prog for the first time, I can relate to this new generation playing alongside us tonight."

John's manager and QEDG boss Martin Darvill sums his experience up: "Goosebumps. It was a testament to what John achieved and to the power of 1970s British classic and prog. It was about creativity, inspiration and love, and my overriding memory will be the joy it brought to Dylan and Lisa."

John Wetton: An Extraordinary Life is out now via Rocket 88. The eight-disc box set of the same name is out via Spirit Of Unicorn Music on November 24 See www.johnwettonlegacy.co.uk for more.

Odd. Weird.

Refreshed and reinvigorated from their recent live shows, **Ozric Tentacles** are back with a full line-up and their 16th studio album, *Lotus Unfolding*. Following on from 2020's *Space For The Earth* and leader Ed Wynne's solo adventures, the psychedelic warriors are bursting with creativity to bring some light to darker times. *Prog* catches up with Wynne Snr to find out more.

Words: Dom Lawson **Image:** Glen Povey

The arrival of a new Ozric Tentacles album is always something to celebrate, but arguably more now than ever. When Ed Wynne's untameable psychedelic warriors rose to something approaching prominence in the early-to-mid-90s, the UK was a hopeful and optimistic place. Fuelled by the energy of a thousand free festivals and delighted by their own fearless musical cross-pollination, they experienced what Wynne now agrees should be known as an "accidental commercial peak" and, against the odds, fit neatly into a flourishing British music scene that was increasingly comfortable with itself. Three decades later, Ozric Tentacles are releasing their new record – *Lotus Unfolding* – into a much darker and less hopeful world, with financial trauma, political turmoil and environmental disaster all weighing heavy on our post-Covid brains.

"In a way, I've always felt that the music we make is an escape from people's angst about politics and the environment and the world," says Wynne. "For me, it's an escape from that when I'm making the records. I can hide from all the trials and tribulations of the world and just swim about in these tunes."

The tunes in question are the six that make up Ozric Tentacles' 16th studio album, *Lotus Unfolding*. Even in a catalogue as long and broad as theirs undoubtedly is, the follow-up to 2020's widely praised *Space For The Earth* is a particularly uplifting and immersive piece of work, and one that has hazy but unmistakable echoes of the music Wynne was writing in the early 90s, when albums like *Pungent Effulgent* and *Jurassic Shift* captured many imaginations. Welcoming the comparison, he notes with an embarrassed chuckle that he remains unsure exactly what kind of record *Lotus Unfolding* is ("It's too recent!") and that throughout his band's 40-year existence, Wynne has written music in a purely intuitive way.

"It's intuitive, *completely*," he states. "I never really have too much of a concept of what a song is going to turn into. The starting

"I've always felt that the music we make is an escape from people's angst about politics and the environment and the world."

Ozrics, L-R: Silas Wynne, Saskia Maxwell, Ed Wynne, Paul Hankin, Brandi Wynne, Tim Wallander.

Silas, according to Ed, knows exactly which new knobs to twiddle.

PRESS

point normally happens in the first part of the day when I get in the studio. I'll go in there with my morning cup of tea, switch on the keyboard, see what's coming through. Then some little tune will come out, and I think, 'Okay, here we go…' and I will at least get the initial germ of the idea done. So many tracks have been started like this, with a clear mind at the beginning of the day."

With all due respect to Ed Wynne, he has never struck *Prog* as a typical morning person.

"Yeah, I'm a morning person, I've just been out since the night before!" he says with a laugh. "But I do like the mornings. My routine normally is that I start, as I just described, and things evolve gradually during the day. By the evening, things can be flying pretty high, so I just climb about in the ideas for a bit. It all starts clear, gradually gets more hedonistic into the evening, and then all the weird stuff goes on late at night. In the morning I sort through it all and try to make sense of it. But there's rarely a concept for an album. It just organically forms, almost in front of my eyes as I watch. Weird, but it seems to work for me."

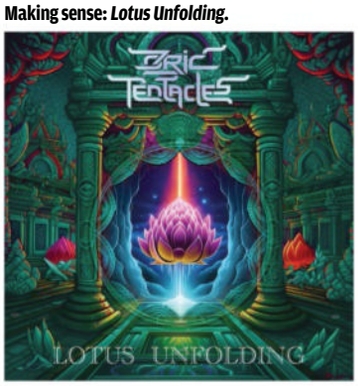
On *Lotus Unfolding*, the efficacy of Wynne's approach is writ large across some of the most wild and expansive music Ozric Tentacles have ever released. With numerous contributions from the current live Ozrics line-up (which includes daughter Brandi Wynne on bass and Tim Wallander on drums), sprawling opener *Storm In A Teacup* and epic centrepiece *Crumplepenny* sound just as timeless and audacious now as revered forebears such as *Ayurvedic* (from *Pungent Effulgent*, 1989) and *Sploosh!* (from *Strangeitude*, 1991) did all those years ago. Meanwhile, Wynne's son Silas has become increasingly essential to the creative process, bringing extensive knowledge of bleeding-edge music technology to bear on his dad's eccentric flights of acid-rock fancy.

"The thing about Silas is that he's very clued up, more than me, on the technology side of things," Wynne admits. "I've been doing this a little while now, as you know, and sometimes the newer tech can be a little confusing. There are certain tricks, little knacks and production techniques that Silas has learnt, and which I haven't attempted to learn because I can't be bothered! Silas has got really good ears as well. His ears have still got their tweeters. The top end is still there!"

On a wonderful streak of top form since 2015's opulent double set *Technicians Of The Sacred*, Ozric Tentacles are still casually messing with their own trademark sound on *Lotus Unfolding*. In particular, the new album's title track is the sonic equivalent of taking a long, relaxing bath while tripping one's merry norks off. Languorous, meandering and blissful, it has seemingly become an unexpected highlight of recent live sets.

"The title track is a very blissy track and it's funny to play that live," says Wynne. "In amongst all those crazy bits of music, suddenly there's *this* one. Sometimes I feel a little tentative, and I worry that people will think it's too light and too spacey, but people absolutely seem to love it. It's a little break from the madness, really. It's unusual to have a track with that amount of bliss, in with all the heavy songs, but I'm really happy with it."

Making sense: ***Lotus Unfolding***.



"There's a younger, newer load of people that didn't have the upbringing of the free festivals and all of that. To them it's just a lot of fun."

When it comes to the superbly titled *Crumplepenny*, Wynne recalls that the entire, 10-minute caboodle began as an experiment with unfathomable old-school synths.

"That was fun, that track. It was kind of an anomaly, in a way. It was myself and Silas jumping in there, plugging in a few synths. Silas has this modular synth set-up that I don't understand at all. It's a load of knobs and wires all over a bit of metal, you know? [Laughs] But he got it squelching away there, we just did this backing track and I spent a lot of hours turning it into an unusual bit of music! It *is* a good title, isn't it? I was so happy with that. I've wanted to use it for years. I imagine Crumplepenny as some Dickensian character!"

Since forming back in the lysergic mists of 1983, Ozric Tentacles have carved a laudably singular niche for themselves, attracting all manner of open-minded listeners along the way. Much to Wynne's ongoing delight, his band are more popular now than at any time since their supposed early-90s heyday. That new, slightly expanded audience will obviously include many of the same pot-huffing weirdos that followed Wynne and his comrades around during their early days, but who else does he think is coming to an Ozric Tentacles show these days?

"Well, our fans are still pretty weird!" he chuckles. "But no, there's a younger, newer load of people that didn't have the upbringing of the free festivals and all of that. To them it's just a lot of fun. We're getting 13, 14-year-olds sometimes, because their parents have told them that they should come along to see us, and they seem to love it. One thing I've heard is that the younger audience like us because there's a lot of stuff going on. They've got a slightly shorter attention span. Sometimes there'll be a weird, splatty noise that comes flying through the sound spectrum and children seem to really enjoy that."

As leader of a band that formed accidentally, became accidentally popular and then survived, in various forms, for another 40 unlikely years, Ed Wynne is right to trust his own intuition. From jamming beside a campfire at Stonehenge in 1983, to overseeing Kscope's recent reissue series and lavish box sets, the story of Ozric Tentacles is enough to cheer anybody up.

"It all feels absolutely bloody wonderful," Wynne concludes. "We've never really pushed ourselves too hard, because we enjoy it so much, whether it works or not. If it financially comes together or not with this band, I'm still going to be doing it either way, because it's what I do and it's my thing! But to suddenly have it making sense after 40 years, it's just great. I'm very happy about it. I'm still getting away with it somehow!"

Lotus Unfolding is out now via Kscope. See www.ozrics.com for more info and live dates.

THE HOME OF PROG IN THE SOUTH

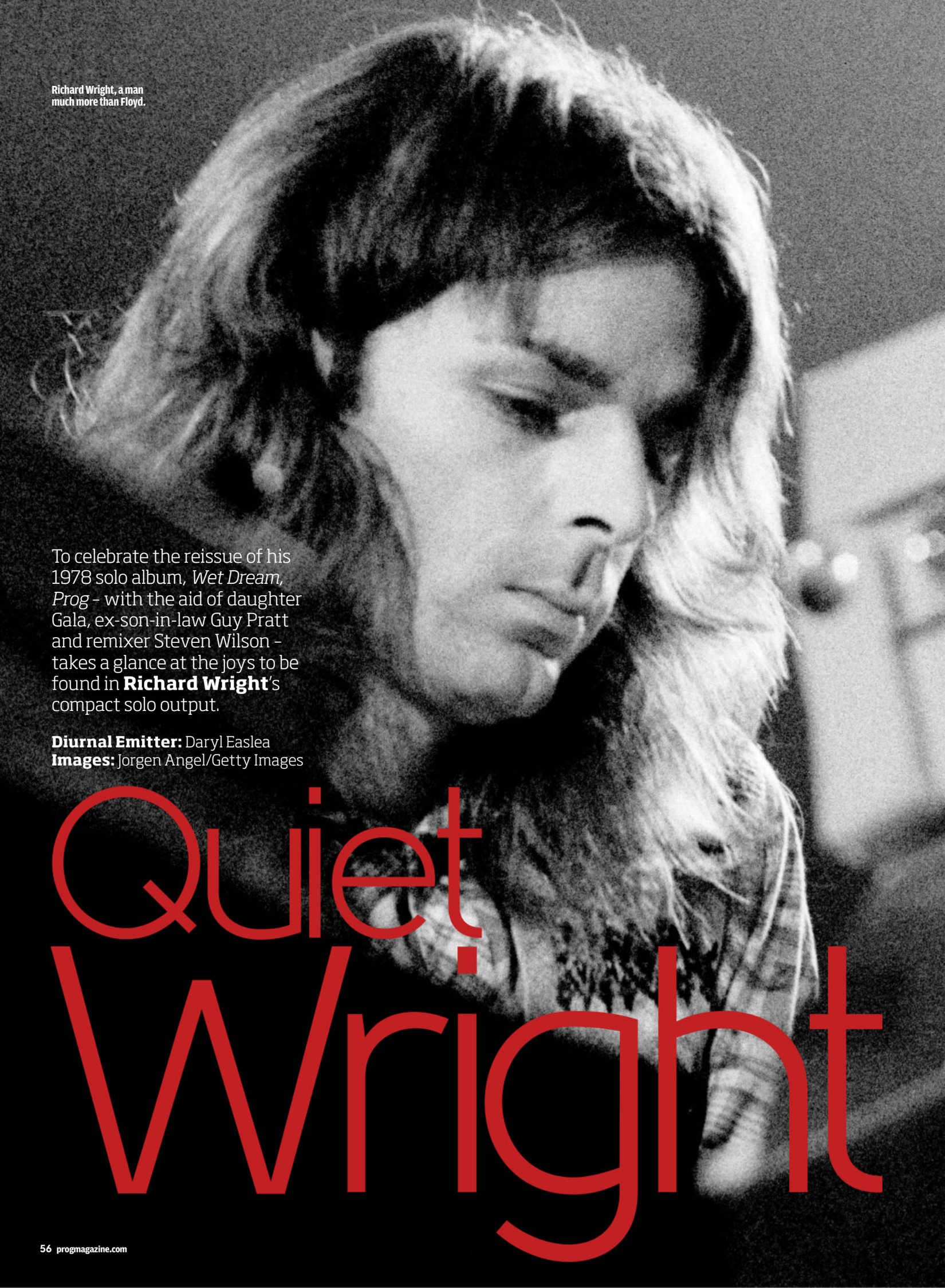
1865
The1865.com

SAT 21.10.23 LOS ENDOS	WED 22.11.23 THE CRAZY WORLD OF ARTHUR BROWN	WED 13.03.24 OZRIC TENTACLES & GONG
TUE 24.10.23 HAYLEY GRIFFITHS	SUN 26.11.23 FOCUS	SUN 24.03.24 SPRIGGAN MIST
WED 25.10.23 THE ANIMALS	WED 06.12.23 STEELY SCAM	SUN 31.03.24 MARQUEE SQUARE HEROES
FRI 27.10.23 JAH WOBBLE	SUN 17.12.23 HAZE	SUN 07.04.24 PROGFATHERS
THU 02.11.23 GENESIS PIANO PROJECT	SAT 13.01.24 THE FLOYD EFFECT	SUN 21.04.24 SOLSTICE
SUN 05.11.23 RED BAZAR	SUN 04.02.24 BEATRIX PLAYERS	FRI 26.04.24 CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIEW
TUE 07.11.23 THAT JOE PAYNE	THU 08.02.24 WILSON & WAKEMAN	SUN 05.05.24 ALSO EDEN
THU 09.11.23 ROSE CITY BAND	FRI 16.02.24 TOOL SHED	SUN 16.06.24 JOHN HACKETT BAND
SUN 19.11.23 BLANK MANUSKRIPT	SUN 03.03.24 FRANCK CARDUCCI	

ROSE CITY BAND

THU 09.11.23
ROSE CITY BAND

THE 1865 | BRUNSWICK SQUARE | SOUTHAMPTON | SO14 3AR
WWW.THE1865.COM / TEL: 02382 687 785



Richard Wright, a man much more than Floyd.

To celebrate the reissue of his 1978 solo album, *Wet Dream*, *Prog* – with the aid of daughter Gala, ex-son-in-law Guy Pratt and remixer Steven Wilson – takes a glance at the joys to be found in **Richard Wright**'s compact solo output.

Diurnal Emitter: Daryl Easlea
Images: Jorgen Angel/Getty Images

Quiet Wright

"Dad loved sound. He'd really get into the weeds of how it sounded as well as being a sensitive musician."

Gala Wright

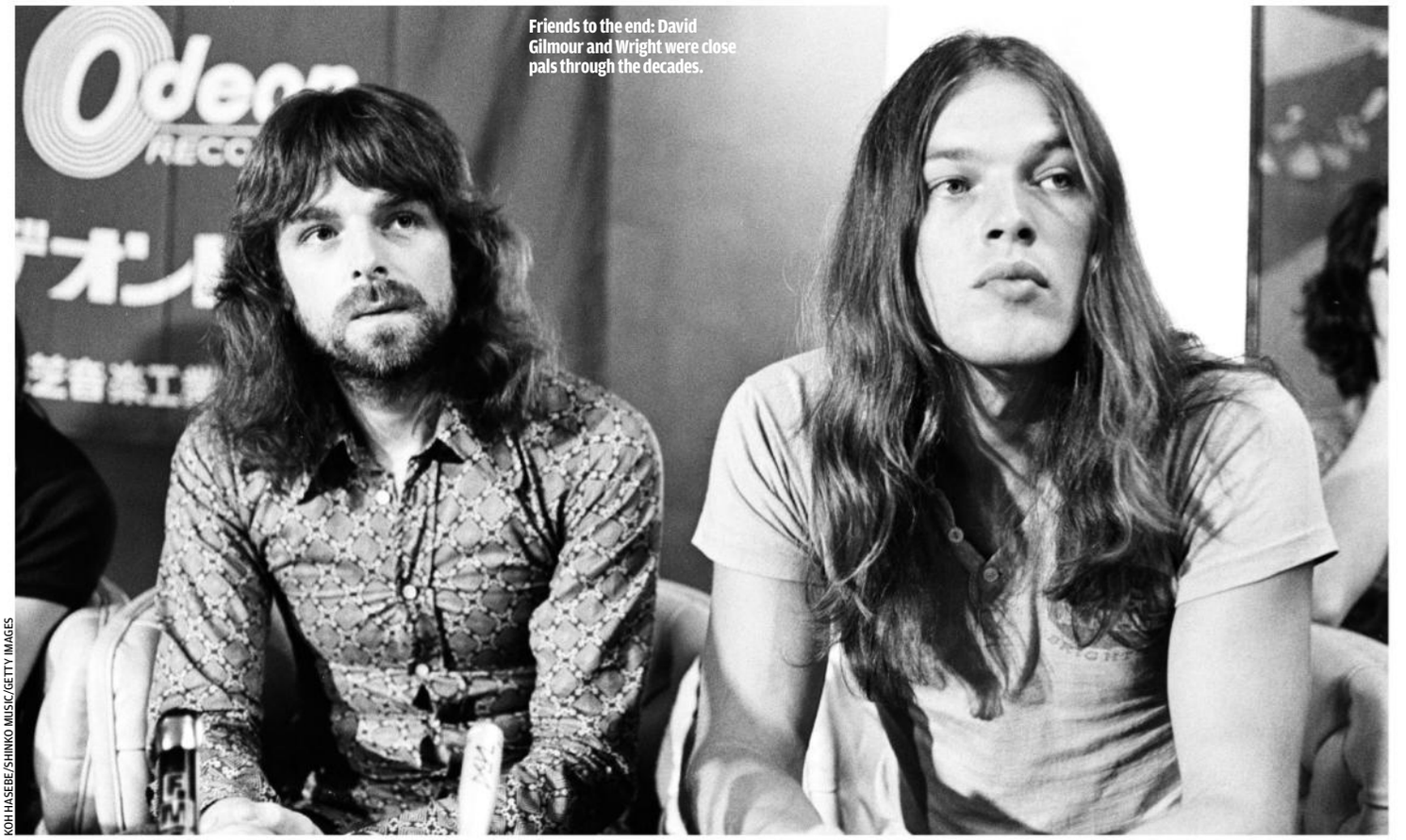
Pink Floyd co-founder Richard Wright redefined the idea of 'the quiet one' in rock. Discreet to the point at times of invisibility, Wright made other legendary taciturn group members such as John Entwistle or George Harrison seem positively garrulous in comparison. Yet what he brought to Floyd was an unmistakable brilliance; his work was just *there*, shimmering and shifting, far less definable than the other parts of the sum. From the ethereal beeps and bleeps of the Syd Barrett days to his most magisterial mid-period material, to that beautiful bluesy improvisation around *Old McDonald Had A Farm* at the start of *Sheep* on *Animals*, Wright added considerable magic. Quietly. Texturally. So quietly, that few in the wider world had actually realised he'd left the group until his name was not on 1983's *The Final Cut*. Happier on his boat than in a recording studio, he was sacked from Pink Floyd by Roger Waters in 1979, but then returned famously to The Wall tour on wages, being the only band member to be paid.

Like that first last laugh, Wright rejoined the group as a session musician in 1987 before becoming a full member again for *The Division Bell* in 1994, and, after his sad passing in 2008, became — like Syd Barrett on *Wish You Were Here* — the main inspiration behind a Floyd album, *The Endless River* in 2014. If it was difficult to see Richard Wright in Pink Floyd, one almost needs a microscope to assess his solo output: two solo albums and one collaboration were unobtrusively released in the 18 years between 1978 and 1996.

A bigger splash: the reissued *Wet Dream*.

An actual wet dream would stir more emotion than when *Wet Dream*, his first album, appeared in September 1978. Pink Floyd had been on sabbatical, having stopped working together in July the previous year, and although David Gilmour was the first to release his solo record, Wright's was the first to be recorded. Of course, the first time solo Wright had been heard was on the 13-minute *Sysyphus* on 1969's *Ummagumma*, something he had previously dismissed as "pretentious", but now, nearly a decade later, times — and budgets — were different.

Although she was only eight at the time, Wright's daughter Gala remembers *Wet Dream* coming together well. "We were around for the actual writing of it. It was a unique situation, the kind of thing that one remembers in their childhood. We were living in Greece in this very basic house. There was electricity in there, so he had something plugged in. It happened quite quickly; it was a couple of months. We went back to school in the September of that year [1977] because we'd not been at school for a year and then all the recording happened. I remember listening to it at boarding school on my Sony Walkman that I'd got for my birthday. I remember thinking Dad's voice was really embarrassing. But then I loved a couple of tracks. I loved *Cat Cruise* right from the beginning."



Friends to the end: David Gilmour and Wright were close pals through the decades.

KOH HASEBE/SHINKO MUSIC/GETTY IMAGES

HOW THE DREAM CAME TRUE

Wet Dream has been given a whole new lease of life. Gala Wright, Steven Wilson and Guy Pratt make a splash.

GALA: We went to Warners and realised we could do it for Dad's 80th, creating the best package we could. Guy told me Steven Wilson really loved the album, and that he should have a go at remixing it. Steven believed it could be improved. We love it – he brought out the layering of the keyboards.

WILSON: If you'd listened to it casually at the time, you'd have dismissed it as the indulgence of a man on his yacht in Greece. Removed from all that, it sounds like a beautiful entry in the Floyd story. You hear how much of the Floyd DNA came from Rick; those slightly jazzy overtones that were even a part of albums like *Animals*. You hear a lot of that *Wish You Were Here* sound as well. That's a lot of people's favourite Floyd album, so I'm thinking they'd love this record.

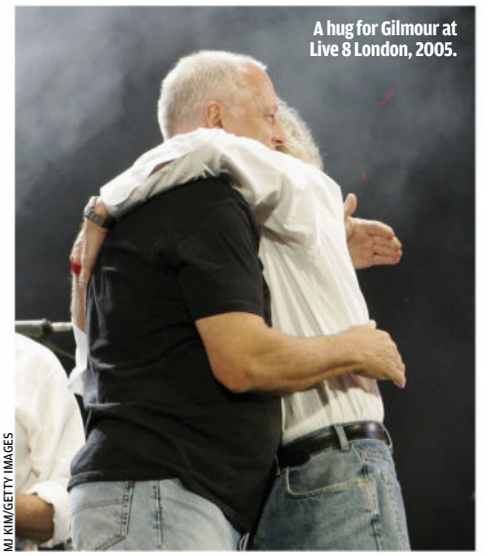
PRATT: Hearing Steven's remix, I was amazed that no one had looked at *Wet Dream* before, but then you realise the reason they hadn't is because it wasn't *this*. Steven has found the album – that's his genius. **DE**

Wright put a band together with Mel Collins on sax, Snowy White from the In The Flesh tour on guitar, and the rhythm section of Robin Trower drummer Reg Isidore and Gonzalez bassist Larry Steele. The album was recorded at Super Bear Studios on the Côte D'Azur between January and February 1978, the studio that would soon be the base for Pink Floyd to make *The Wall*.

"On a solo project, you have to be on top of it, all the time, constantly," Wright told Karl Dallas in 1978. "I've never been in control before, totally, so that's one of the reasons I did a solo album, to put myself into that sort of situation. I wanted to see if I could cope with it. It was a challenge."

With its mellow vibe, *Wet Dream* instantly dated on its release. "Among us younger fans, obviously, there was no way *Wet Dream* was going to make a dent at all," Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets bassist Guy Pratt says. "It came out six weeks before [The Clash's] *Give 'Em Enough Rope*! But it's exactly what Rick wanted and there's nothing wrong with that – just not then. If he'd put it out when, say, ambient house was just starting, everyone would have been all over it to do remixes, there would have been an Orb collaboration…"

"*Wet Dream* is an album that's completely devoid of any punk aesthetic," says Steven Wilson. "If you listen to *Animals* and *The Wall*, it's there, which is why the Floyd were able to ride out the whole period in a way that a lot of bands of their generation probably weren't. Listening now, with 45 years of hindsight, it's really natural – a little naïve, but I embrace that as a positive now. I'm not going to say it's a masterpiece, but it is a beautiful and a totally worthwhile entry in the Floyd canon."



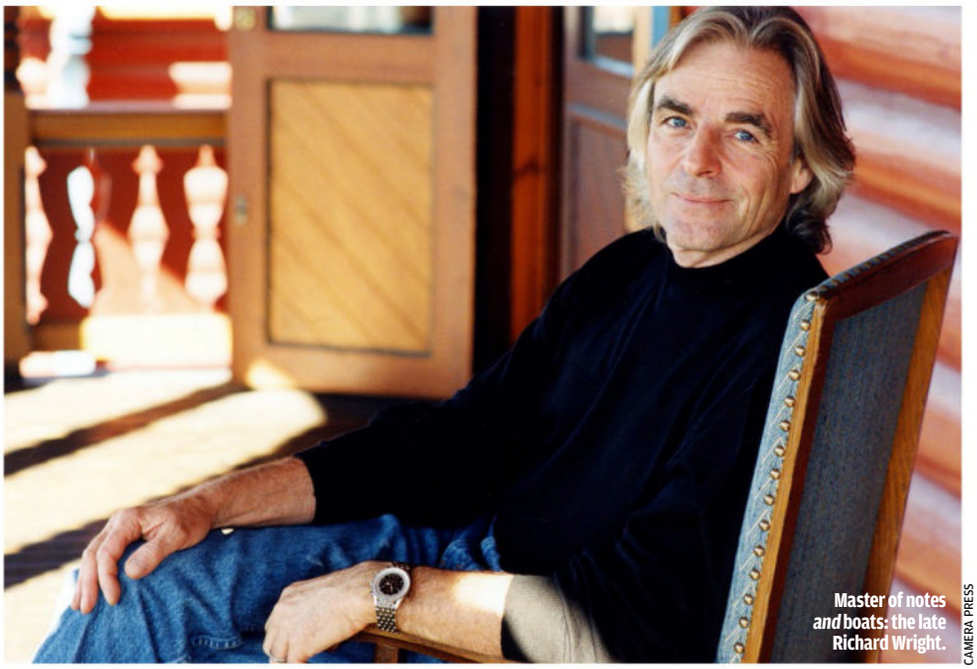
A hug for Gilmour at Live 8 London, 2005.

MJ KIM/GETTY IMAGES

Wright later described *Wet Dream* as rather amateurish, but that is something Wilson refutes. "It doesn't sound amateurish to me. A little gauche in places lyrically, perhaps, but Rick would not claim he was a lyric writer. His is almost an underachieving voice, which, in an age of Auto-Tune, I would rather listen to, speaking as someone who themselves has an underachieving voice. It sounds so natural."

Any promotion there may have been for *Wet Dream* was curtailed because Pink Floyd had to go back to work, thanks to the looming inland revenue issues and the misinvestment of Norton Warburg. "Dad would go off sailing," Gala says. "He certainly didn't communicate with us anything about how things worked."

"Pink Floyd were in terrible trouble," Pratt says. "I mean *rich people* trouble. Not 'They're



Master of notes *and* boats: the late Richard Wright. CAMERA PRESS

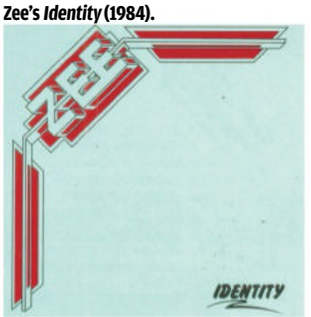
coming to cut the gas off/heat or eat' trouble, but they had this massive tax bill, that's why they were in France."

After Wright's well-documented ousting from Pink Floyd, his first appearance was in the unlikely duo of Zee with Dave Harris, who, as 'Dee Harriss', had led Fashion on their second album, 1982's *Fabrique*. The pair had been introduced by saxophonist Raf *'Baker Street'* Ravenscroft. Their sole album, *Identity*, shouldn't be overlooked, as it's probably the most contemporary thing ever done by a member of Pink Floyd (bar possibly the New York no-wave free jazz of *Nick Mason's Fictitious Sports*). For example, the track *Strange Rhythm* places itself somewhere near Donna Summer's version of *State Of Independence* and *All Night Long* by Lionel Richie.

"Dave Harris asked us a couple of years ago if we wanted to re-release it. He's such a lovely man," Gala says. "We knew it wasn't Dad's proudest moment, but at the same time, we remember him recording the album well. Dad loved sound. He'd really get into the weeds of how it sounded as well as being a sensitive musician. That's what was happening with the Zee album – they were playing with the Fairlight, which was his new toy, really going for it."

Identity seemed to be missing just that and, on its release in April 1984, the first commercial sighting of Wright in the 80s disappeared faster than Frankie could say *'Relax'* (pop's pre-occupation at that time). Wright's final solo album, *Broken China*, landed in October 1996 after Wright had two further Floyd albums and tours under his belt. Co-written and produced with Anthony Moore, it was a grander work. "It has got a producer, which means it has an editor," Pratt says.

Zee's *Identity* (1984).



Broken China (1996).

> "Someone said every band has a quiet one, but if Rick had been any quieter, you'd have to put out a missing persons alert."
>
> **Guy Pratt**

"Broken China has a lot of the conceptual sweep that we associate with Floyd," adds Wilson. "It sounds more like it was a part of what was going on in the 90s, a lot more use of digital technology. I love the fact it's an epic."

It also features two great performances from the late Sinéad O'Connor. However, in keeping with the rest of Wright's solo work, and despite the elevation that *The Division Bell* offered him, it failed to make the UK or US charts.

In the early 21st century, Wright joined David Gilmour and Guy Pratt in the touring band for Gilmour's *On An Island*. "That tour was such a great thing for Rick to end on," Pratt notes. "That was about the love, and people will always talk about the version of *Echoes* on that tour. Rick was a sideman, so he got introduced every night. He'd never been introduced onstage in his life. It was so nice that he got to see the love people had for him."

That, and his part in Pink Floyd's Live 8 reunion in 2005, was the coda to his career. "It became more apparent as the years went on that David loved Rick so much," says Pratt, "and kept him involved in everything, because he understood the value of their musical relationship. That was such a key part of Pink Floyd which gets overlooked in the 'Alpha wars'. Rick went to Lindos [an island in Greece] first, David followed. Even when Rick was out of the band, David and he would meet up down there. David went to all three of Rick's weddings; he was the only person who did."

There would be no follow-up to *Broken China* as Wright died at home in London on September 15, 2008, aged 65. Rumours of a stockpile of solo material are, sadly, just rumours: "I've got a track that I worked on with Rick; I added drums and bass and it was really beautiful," Pratt says. "Unfortunately, it's so many data storage formats ago, I can't find it. I can't remember what it was called because it would have had one of those silly, sketchy titles. If people are hoping for a long-lost album, I really don't think it's there."

If anything, Wright's real solo project was his sailing. "Someone said every band has a quiet one, but if Rick had been any quieter, you'd have to put out a missing persons alert," says Pratt. "I sailed the Atlantic with him in 2002. There's a picture of us in the Canary Islands before we set off. I looked at it the other day – that Rick, 'Boat Rick', so relaxed and confident. That was his happy place. It really got me, remembering *that* guy. That's where he could be in control, running a boat."

His other great pleasure was his grandchild, Gala and Guy's son, Stanley, who was born in 2002. "He was a brilliant granddad," Pratt says. "Totally naughty grandpa: he undermined all of your parenting, everything grandparents are supposed to do."

Richard Wright once said that Pink Floyd was always a marriage that was on trial separation. Although, sadly he can never rejoin that union, while skirmishes continue in their current less-than-civil war, a corner of the group will forever be bathed in Wright's warm, sun-kissed textures. And for those who wish to explore further, there are these three solo works that go some way to fleshing out the body of this most hidden man.

Wet Dream is out now via Rhino. See www.rickwright.com for more information.

Who hasn't dreamt of working for a record label, or even starting their own? In the 21st century, all you need is an act or two, legal terms to release said acts' work and the internet. But going back 25 years, things were a little more complex. Not that that would put off two friends, Chris Reeder and John O'Carroll, who would go on to run one of the most respected, progressive-minded underground labels in the UK, Rocket Recordings.

To Boldly GO

What started in 1998 as a hobbyist seven-inch label, putting out records by pals in Bristol, has blossomed into one of the UK's – if not the world's – most intriguing psychedelic and experimental labels, loved by both its fans and its own acts. Praised by Stewart Lee, Julian Cope and Elijah Wood, it's time to celebrate 25 years of **Rocket Recordings**.

Rocket Queen: Jo Kendall **Images:** Rocket Records

“We heard Hawkwind and that became huge for us. Not just the music but their record sleeves, too.”

Chris Reeder, Rocket

Rocket... from their crypt! Label bosses Chris Reeder and John O’Carroll.

Blast Off!

Rocket acts reveal all about being in the label's orbit.

DAVID J SMITH, THE HOLY FAMILY

Named after a 1991 Channel 4 documentary on Angela Carter, London's The Holy Family are one of Rocket's newest signings, bringing kosmische, Zeuhl and folk-based incantations, mixed with electronica. They mutated from instrumental proggers Guapo and are led by David J Smith alongside Kavus Torabi from Knifeworld, Gong, Utopia Strong; Emmett Elvin from Knifeworld; Sam Warren from Thumpermonkey and Michael J York from Utopia Strong and The Witching Tale (with his partner, Mediæval Bæbes' Katherine Blake). Their new album *Go Zero* is out now.

You're a new kid on the block, then?
Well, old 'new kid'!

How did you meet Rocket?
It was through Kavus. I was in the process of evolving my very long-term band Guapo. When we were working on the first [self-titled] record about five years ago, Kavus suggested we talk to Rocket to release it.

What is the difference between Guapo and The Holy Family?
The big difference is I'm no longer the drummer, I'm the so-called frontman [laughs]. I'm still playing, but it's electronic percussive set-up as well as vocals. The Holy Family might not be as 'prog' as Guapo – that's what Guapo were labelled over the years – there's a more mantric, psychedelic element to the music. However, whether it be visual art or music, I always like to ground it in some kind of concept – a classic progressive trope that I've kept.

How did the debut album, *The Holy Family*, happen?
We originally convened to do a new Guapo record, but I wanted to do something different and not just rehearse intensively, write lots of material and then go into the studio. So we went to a bandmate's house out in the countryside and had a long weekend there. We improvised, and I didn't use a drum kit. When that was complete, I began work on it straight away, editing and mixing, but I completely hit a brick wall and put it aside, really disillusioned. Slowly, I decided to revisit it. And that's when I thought, "I'm going to try something I've never done before with this band. I'm going write lyrics for it and sing!" That's when the inspiration came. I realised this was a completely different band and it needed a new identity.

You're an artist, too. How did The Holy Family visuals come about?
I'm a sculptor – by day in the marine industry and outside of that I'm avant-garde, influenced by people like Malcolm Poynter [whose work graced the sleeve of Peter Gabriel's fourth album]. I worked alongside Chris at Rocket and we eventually hit on the perfect look for the music.

Rocket Recordings was the label for you, then?
Yes. I didn't approach anyone else. After being on many labels over decades, it's been a wonderful experience, and the feeling among the acts seems to be "we're in it together", no matter what music we make.

Your second album *Go Zero* has just come out – tell us about it.
Go Zero is slightly darker and heavier in terms of the concept, and 95-per-cent culled from improvisations. The main concept came from an artist and novelist, Brian Catling, who wrote a trilogy of books called *The Vorrh*, which is set in many worlds, eventually in London. It proposes that there's no such thing as a future; we're constantly moving forward into our past until we eventually reach our own creation, or Tree Of Life. That's why Chris at Rocket tied the artwork in with the forest and a kind of luminescence that's humming from it.

What's the appeal of working with Rocket?
There's just that professional DIY ethic, their dedication and their honesty. I don't think anyone could work with them and go, "I'm not gonna do another record for this label." There's no one better for us to work with. **JK**

Holier than thou: The Holy Family.

Reeder and O'Carroll first met in the third-year art class at secondary school in Alveston, south Gloucestershire. "John was primarily into hip hop and I was into metal," Reeder tells *Prog*. "We cross-pollinated and that made us not too much like 'a tribe'."

"In a small town, you can spot the rock kids, the ravers, the hippies," says O'Carroll. "And we wanted to hang out with all of them!"

Aged 17, O'Carroll went to stay with friends in Paris and came back with tapes of Can and Neu! to play Reeder. "That set us on a new path for listening," he says.

"Then we heard Hawkwind and that became huge for us," adds Reeder, "not just the music but their record sleeves, too. *In Search Of Space* by Barney Bubbles absolutely blew us away."

O'Carroll went on to study technical drawing and computer animation while Reeder did graphic design. Steady jobs came along, plus the lure of nearby Bristol where the clubs and record shops would also prove to be influential to the pair, and to their friend Simon Healey.

One night, Reeder and Healey were watching their friend's band, Lillydamwhite, performing at the Louisiana. "We thought, 'We should put their record out,'" says Reeder. "And the next day, when the alcohol wore off, we decided to actually do it."

When word got out, Bristol's premier psychedelic warlords The Heads asked, "How about us too?" and a split single

"They're all about broadening people's horizons, there are no boundaries with Rocket."

Jimmy Martin, Teeth Of The Sea

was released in March 1998, the label now titled Rocket Recordings (reflecting acts on the rise, with a cosmic slant). True to their design roots, the logo came before the name ("I saw a picture of a spaceship on an ad for Buster Crabbe's *Flash Gordon* and thought, 'That looks cool,'" says Reeder). Fancying a Vertigo swirl-type brand-mark on the sleeves they commissioned a 50s-style sci-fi logo from the graphic design legend, the late Frank Kozik, owner of stoner-psych label, Man's Ruin.

Reeder, O'Carroll and Healey were utterly green but gathered great advice from 'Fat' Paul Horlick from the Swarffinger label, a DJ and champion of local experimental acts. "We asked him, 'How do you set up a label?'" says Reeder. "He told us where to get records made and how to distribute them. Later, Geoff Barrow [from Portishead, BEAK› and the Invada label] helped us out with a major

Rocket Recordings: no negative vibes.

The Utopia Strong: no novelty tunes here.

Pole Position

The Gallows Pole novelist, and occasional *Prog* writer, Ben Myers on finding his muse through Rocket.

"I'd long been aware of Rocket Recordings – not least because they release Teeth Of The Sea, whose previous band I'd released on a label I briefly ran. Being a fan of outlandish psychedelia I bought *World Music* by Goat when it came out in 2012. I became a bit obsessed with their track *Golden Dawn* and included it on a playlist I made while researching and writing *The Gallows Pole* novel. I thought the TV series should be head-bending, colourful and push the limits of how esoteric a BBC drama could be, so I passed the playlist on to [director] Shane Meadows who added tracks to it, in order to set the mood and tone for the production. Two bands leapt out at him – Lankum and Goat, the latter of whom Shane and producer Nickie Sault then commissioned to write new material. Goat's anonymous 'leader' even flew in for a special screening in Leeds, covertly sitting in

the darkness of the cinema among the cast and crew. But it all began with Rocket, who have also introduced me to tons of great far-out sounds. Long may they reign." **JK**

issue. That was the Bristol scene, we supported one another."

Rocket was now a DIY seven-inch label, and established psych bands such as Thee Hypnotics were being recommended to them. Having Factory Records, early Vertigo label and Hipgnosis as visual influences, O'Carroll and Reeder designed most of the sleeves and created videos in-house. Rocket became a cottage industry for nearly a decade. Albums were released, too — initially on CD. "We started to see the death of vinyl," says O'Carroll, "and as time went on, the death of CD, the rise of the download and streaming, and the rise of vinyl again. Every year we'd say, 'How are we approaching things now?'"

In 2008 Healey left to concentrate on family matters. Reeder and O'Carroll carried Rocket on, looking for acts that hit a sweet spot of progressive psychedelia, in all forms.

"I was DJing in London one night when someone put a CD in my hand then ran away," says Reeder. "It was Jimmy Martin from a band called Jaws. I sent the track on a compilation CD-R to John and it caught his ear."

What happened next is in our interview with Martin (see below).

"For their professional DIY ethic, dedication and honesty, there's no one better to work with."

David J Smith, The Holy Family

A band called Jaws already existed, so the French title for the film was applied and Teeth Of The Sea have been with Rocket ever since; their sixth album *Hive* is out now. "Our 10th anniversary party was a turning point," Reeder says. "[Motorik psych group] White Hills, The Heads and TOTS played for us. TOTS were a change of guard in what we were doing — they were guitar-driven and used electronica. This was the start of a new chapter."

Rocket, says O'Carroll, "was starting to simmer". A psychedelic renaissance was in progress with acts such as Tame Impala leading the way and psych fests springing up all over. "John said, 'Imagine a band that has Sabbath, Fela Kuti and Can in them?'" says Reeder. "And we kind-of found them!"

Enter Sweden's Goat, a mysterious masked collective who unexpectedly broke through with the 70s Afro-psych sounds of their 2012 debut, *World Music*, by far the label's best-selling release (see sidebar on the opposite page from Goatman). "I remember walking to the tube station to go to work. I had goosebumps listening to it," says Reeder, recalling when the album first hit Rocket's inbox as a cold pitch. In just a few years Goat would be commissioned for film soundtracks such as for the British comedy horror *Double Date* (2017) and this year's BBC Two supernatural historical drama, *The Gallows Pole* (see sidebar with *Gallows Pole* novelist Ben Myers on p63). "I've had the greatest thrill from this," says Reeder. "Like seeing them on BBC TV playing Glastonbury in 2013, I've loved this infiltration of the mainstream."

By 2015, Reeder and O'Carroll were running Rocket full-time as the roster expanded in exciting new directions ("But still somehow under our umbrella of 'heady' sounds," says O'Carroll), and working with the cosmic, caped Bonnacons Of Doom, who lived the Hawkwind dream when Stacia Blake appeared onstage with them at Kozfest in 2019.

Also in 2019, Rocket took a chance on The Utopia Strong, featuring Knifeworld/Gong guitarist Kavus Torabi and synth/reeds/bagpiper Michael J York, plus snooker ace-turned-psychedelic modular extemporiser Steve Davis. Davis had been inspired by TOTS man Mike Bourne's modular synth

Blast Off!

Rocket acts reveal all about being in the label's orbit.

JIMMY MARTIN, TEETH OF THE SEA

From the ashes of a Roxy Music tribute band in London rose a psychedelic rock group – with trumpet – that quickly busted out of the parameters of one style and into ambient, electronic and rave music. With their sixth album *Hive* out now, their relationship with Rocket has allowed them to create any musical colour they like.

It all started with you pressing a CD into Chris' hands when he was DJing...

Yes, at a Heads gig in Stoke Newington [north-east London] in 2006. We'd made a CD and were drunkenly giving it to people at various places. I didn't know it was Chris from Rocket, I just knew the DJs were playing good tunes. He got in touch with us on MySpace to say he liked it. We weren't expecting that, a vote of confidence. We looked at what they were doing, saw the acts they had... from the outset they were just really enthusiastic. We recorded the debut album, Rocket put it out and Julian Cope gave it a review on his website, *Head Heritage*. That was the point where we were like, "Wow, maybe there's something going on here."

Did being on Rocket help you get discovered by the right people?

It was definitely the start. Nowadays people would query why you'd be on a label at all, because you could do so much yourself if you're really well organised. But Rocket work so hard on behalf of their bands, they try every avenue so you're bound to be heard by more people. You can't put a price on that, really.

Tell us about *Hive*.

Some of it comes from this soundtrack to the Apollo Moon landings that we made for the Science Museum in 2019, which was a terrifying experience! *Hive* is everything we've done before, but *more*. The experimental bits are more experimental, the melancholy bits more melancholy, the gnarly bits more gnarly [laughs]. We got a bit of Roxy Music in there again, and we have the poppiest song we've ever done, *Butterfly House*, and Kath Gifford [Stereolab, Moonshake, Snowpony] sings on that. As a guitarist I come from an experimental approach but also shredding. On one track I have a solo inspired by Vernon Reid's on *Cult Of Personality* by Living Colour.

That's really eclectic! And Rocket Recordings have always supported Teeth Of The Sea as they evolve.

They're all about broadening people's horizons. It's not about psych or genre definitions. There are no boundaries for what you can do with Rocket, and that's what keeps people inspired and makes Rocket an inspiring label. **JK**

Hive mind: Teeth Of The Sea.

Blast Off!

Rocket acts reveal all about being in the label's orbit.

GOATMAN, GOAT

If you know one Rocket band, it might be enigmatic Swedish collective Goat. Over a decade since their 2012 debut for the label, *World Music*, the band have captured imaginations with their ethnically-psychedelic rock, their tribal costuming and the primal female harmonies. There is no 'frontperson' as such, but the mysterious Goatman was able to supply some answers to *Prog*'s burning questions about life at Rocket, and their fifth album, *Medicine*.

Rocket was the first label to pick up on you. Where did *World Music* come from, musically?
The inspiration at the time was a lot of African stuff; Zamrock and Afrobeat. Our music was always going to have guitars, lots of fuzz [pedals] and female vocals. All our songs are created in a haze of esoteric bliss.

***World Music* really captured the public's attention – how did that feel?**
We never hoped, wished or asked for anything, but we're grateful for everything. Rocket was good at helping us [get the music out] and in raising awareness of us. It was written in the stars that they would find us and we've always had a good [relationship] with them.

You operate as a 'collective' and like to be anonymous. Why?
We don't want to represent the music as [belonging to] individuals but as its own entity. We take no interest in personal fame – if there's something that we're afraid of, it's that.

With your latest, *Medicine*, you mention that this is a "mellower" direction and you cite artists such as experimental folk band Arbete Och Fritid, progressive duo Charlie & Esdor and psych rock group Träd, Gräs & Stenar. Are you avid crate-diggers or do you try to not be so influenced by other music?
We don't try, or not try, anything. We get influenced from a lot of stuff and we don't filter. We just go along with whatever feels right at that moment. We now have several rehearsal places all around the globe and we jam a lot and songs come from that, or they might get written in other ways. Sometimes, when inspiration comes, it's almost unstoppable and sometimes there's nothing there! We just don't worry too much about it.

***Medicine*'s big theme is impermanence and in its notes you mention that Goat are "moving along as freely and open-mindedly as possible", but how do you manage that in the modern day? There's a lot to get bogged down by, from personal events to the state of the world.**
A big question to answer. Is there a conflict between moving freely through life and being upset by all the bullshit people create? No, there is not. But you need to find a philosophical and spiritual path through life in which you can rest your mind. You can hate the rich greedy bastards that fuck it all up and still be blissfully grateful for your existence knowing that your life, as does all life, just passes through in a blink in billions of circular processes that we are all part of. You are not important but just as important as the sun, or the grass, or a stone, or whatever. We are all part of a story that never ends.

Your story has Rocket firmly connected to it. Why are they the label for you?
Mainly because they understand us and our approach to this rock band thing – and they're also very nice and funny guys. **JK**

Goat: a dizzy explosion of sound.

improvisations at London's Café OTO. After jamming with Torabi and York, they too did a TOTS and pinned a CD of their efforts on O'Carroll at Hackney's Moth Club, after Davis and Torabi DJed a TOTS release party.

"With only *Snooker Loopy* to my name at that point, I was a wild card," says Davis.

O'Carroll concurs. "We didn't want this to be a novelty, 'The Steve Davis Project'. But the music was too good to ignore." It was no novelty; a second LP of gentle kosmische (with a disco finale), *International Treasure* came out in 2022, with more planned for 2024.

The camaraderie on Rocket's roster comes across very strongly the more you chat with the founders and the acts. David J Smith from The Holy Family mentions this (see sidebar on p62), and new-ish signing Alison Cotton — whose 2022 folk-drone work *The Portrait You Painted Of Me* was a critical smash — agrees. "It seems wherever I've gone there's someone in a Rocket act there to say hello and cheer me on," she says.

"We never had a business goal or plan," says O'Carroll. "This has all just been based on having an open mind to tap into each other's tastes."

"Those tastes have evolved," says Reeder, "but somehow, 25 years on, it's all still Rocket."

See rocketrecordings.blogspot.com for more information about Rocket Recordings and their latest releases.

“The thing is, the mainstream Christian person in America has no interest in anything that sounds like progressive rock at all. But on the whole this is a prog album, for prog fans.”

His coat might not have as many colours, but Neal Morse has done justice to the Biblical story of Joseph.

The Dreamer's Ball

Neal Morse has returned to the Bible to inspire his latest concept album, *The Dreamer – Joseph: Part One*. The singer-musician has harnessed the tale of big dreams and redemption woven with sibling rivalry and betrayal and transformed it into a progressive rock epic. Morse tells *Prog* all about it and also details his second collaborative album with Nick D'Virgilio and Ross Jennings.

Words: Grant Moon
Images: Chad Hoerner

Neal Morse is a little hoarse. We catch him the day before August's Morsefest, his annual convention at his local church in White House, Tennessee; there'll be another at the Netherlands' fabled Boerderij club the following weekend. He and his band — long-time friend and drummer Mike Portnoy, bassist Randy George, guitarist Eric Gillette and keyboardist Bill Hubauer — have been rehearsing hard alongside their string and horn sections.

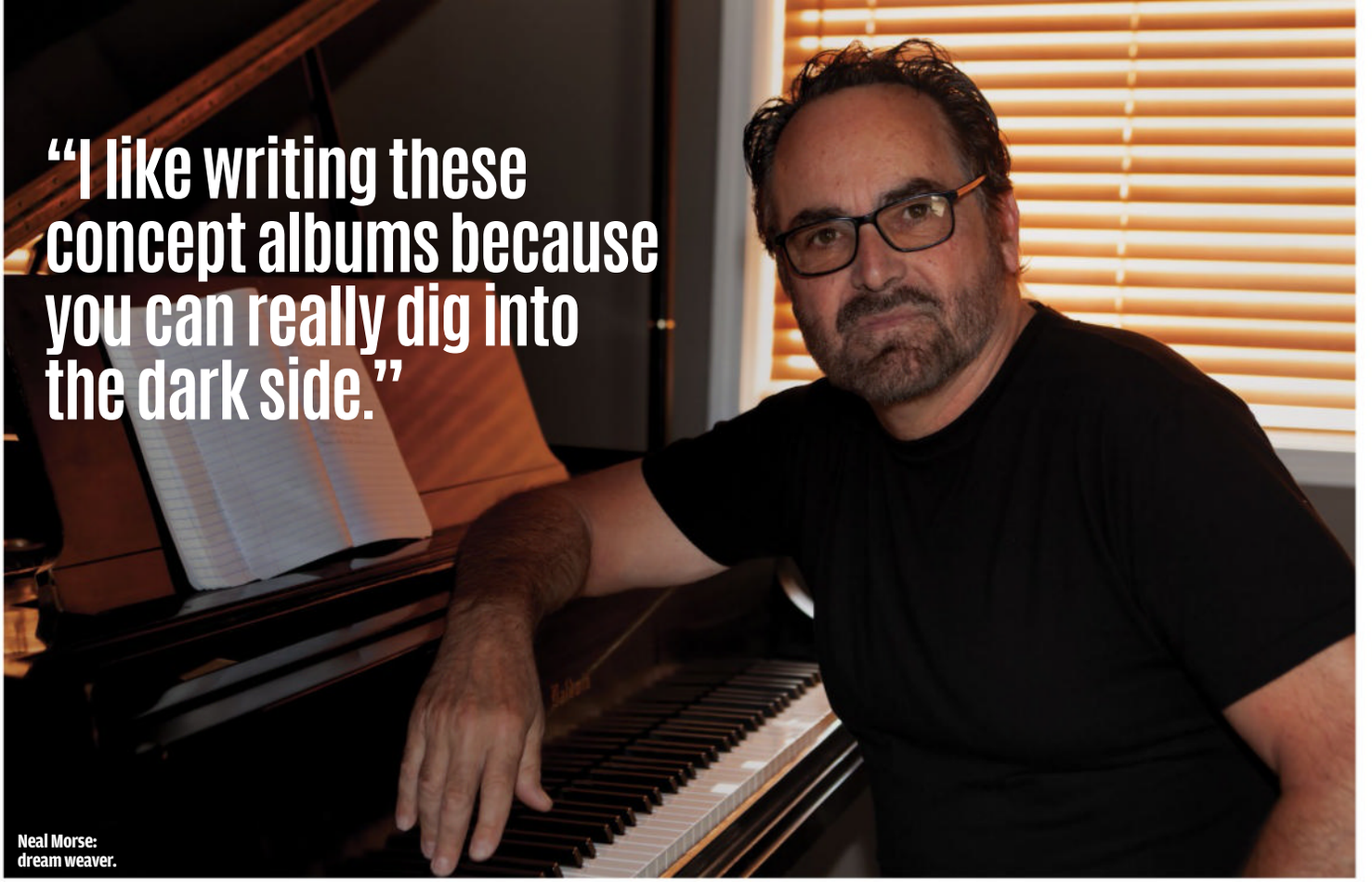
"Morsefest has taken on a life of its own," he tells *Prog*, all rock star-gravelly and looking two-thirds of his 63 years. "It's this special event for a lot of people and, to use a Christian term, it's a great 'fellowship', great camaraderie. Everyone's sharing in the joy of this music they love. I'm blessed to be a part of it, really."

In the set are pieces from his latest religious concept album, *The Dreamer — Joseph: Part One*, and they'll play the entirety of a pivotal record turning 20 this year. *Testimony* was made in the light of Morse's conversion to Christianity in 2002, a transformation that saw him leave both Spock's Beard — the band he made his name with — and, for a while at least, the supergroup Transatlantic.

The grandeur and complexity of his symphonic prog naturally lends itself to big themes, and his faith would inform most of his subsequent work, from 2004's *One* (based on the parable of the prodigal son) to 2020's *Sola Gratia*, about the life of St Paul. Released on the Frontiers label, his 2019 rock opera *Jesus Christ The Exorcist* featured fellow Spock's alumni Ted Leonard as Jesus, Nick D'Virgilio as Judas Iscariot and Morse himself as Pilate. It even hit the Top 100 in the US.

Morse recalls, "Every couple of months after that Frontiers would email saying, 'Hey, when can we have a follow-up?' And they were pretty specific about it being another rock opera with multiple singers. I thought of [King] David, or of maybe a second instalment on Paul, or something that wasn't even from the Bible, like [anti-Nazi theologian, Dietrich] Bonhoeffer. But in the end I settled on Joseph."

A key figure in the book of Genesis, Joseph's is a story of many colours. A Canaanite and vivid dreamer betrayed and sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph became a servant to the head of the Pharaoh's guard in Egypt, and was thrown in jail when he refused the advances of his boss' spiteful wife. But



Neal Morse: dream weaver.

his skills in oneiromancy — the interpretation of dreams — were his salvation, and he become the Pharaoh's chief adviser, also saving Egypt from famine, forgiving his brothers and founding one of Israel's main tribes.

"It was a very attractive story," says Morse, "because of the dreams, and then the betrayal. I like writing these concept albums because you can really dig into the dark side. The main thing that attracts me about the Joseph story is how, everywhere he goes, when he's done wrong he does excellently toward those who wrong him."

From its proudly dissonant overture, *The Dreamer — Joseph: Part One* is a rock musical that takes the listener halfway, from Joseph's early dreams to his incarceration. Morse is in the title role, and the cast includes his son Wil, Leonard again, and talented young singer Talon David. With musician guests such as Flying Colors bandmate/guitar god Steve Morse on board, the music is by turns proggy (5/8 rocker *Burns Like A Wheel*), anthemic (*Before The World Was*) and pop-rocky (the heavy *Liar, Liar* and the nicely sleazy *Slave Boy*). Only the Verdi-lite choral moment *I Will Wait For The Lord* sounds ecclesiastic — *Joseph...* is every inch a prog rock opera.

The Dreamer - Joseph: Part One.

"It's gotta be prog, right?" says Morse with a laugh. "The thing is, the mainstream Christian person in America has no interest in anything that sounds like progressive rock at all. So as soon as the overture hits for *Joseph...*, all those mainstream people are going to be out! If you clipped out a single, they might go, 'Oh, that's cool, I could listen to that.' But on the whole this is a prog album, for prog fans."

For the record, in conversation Morse is never once preachy about religion. He's good, honest company — a prolific, talented musician who happens to be devoutly religious. He says he doesn't necessarily feel his God's guiding presence when writing, but regularly wakes up with ideas, and attributes this to God "giving me music in my half-sleep". The first sketch for the song *Before The World Was* just fell out of him, and he thinks that's how his Lord often works in life: "You tell Him you're going to trust Him and walk this way. Sometimes you'll feel some specific guidance, but it's not like every moment He's saying, 'Now say this, now say that!'"

Say 'Joseph musical' to most Brits, and chances are they'll get a mental image of Jason Donovan or Phillip Schofield in a swirling, rainbow-hued coat, then sing you a few lines of *Any Dream Will Do*. Surprisingly, Morse has never even heard Tim Rice/Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Joseph And The Technicolor Dreamcoat*: "I lived on *Jesus Christ Superstar* on vinyl when I was 12 years old, but I've never heard *...Dreamcoat*. I need to! But when I was writing the blurb for the album I did say — 'Joseph — you know, the guy with the coat!' Because when you're talking about Joseph from the Bible it's either the guy with the coat, or Mary's husband."

Joseph: Part Two is due for release early next year, and also on the slate for early 2023 is Transatlantic's live set recorded at 2022's Morsefest. That group — comprising Morse, Portnoy, Roine Stolt and Pete Trewavas — are rumoured to have called it quits this year after releasing *The Final Flight: Live At L'Olympia*. But could it be that Morse is wavering?

"I don't think any of us ever want to say anything definitive, because you don't know what can happen. It's the big joke — all those bands doing their 15th farewell tour! And I get it — you'll feel that way when you do it, then a year or two goes by and you think, 'You know, I'd sure like to do that again. Why not?'"

And as for those 'mainstream Christians' deterred by *Joseph*'s progressive style, there's always the digestible melodies, tight vocal harmonies and good old-fashioned songcraft of Morse's trio with Nick D'Virgilio and Haken's Ross Jennings. Their debut, *Troika*, was one of the sweeter surprises of 2022 and their second, *Sophomore*, is out in November.

"That was lovely," says Morse. "It was very easy compared to *Joseph* because Nick and Ross are playing and singing a lot of stuff, so my role's not as major, and the music's much simpler. The *Troika* stuff sounds great with just an acoustic guitar, a little percussion and our voices. It's a very special blend."

Both albums were recorded remotely, but the three finally got together in person at Morse's place earlier this year, when Jennings was touring the US with Haken. They made two videos, did a photoshoot, and got to sing in the same room for the first time.

"I can't say enough about the camaraderie and friendship factor that's involved," says Morse. "That's a really deep part of it, and as I get older I appreciate it even more.

"I haven't seen the Flying Colors guys for some time, and I miss them. It's just really good to be together. I think that's something God cares about very much — gathering people together, and the beautiful things that can happen. It's a good thing."

The Dreamer — Joseph: Part One is out now on Frontiers, while D'Virgilio, Morse & Jennings release Sophomore via InsideOutMusic on November 10. See www.nealmorse.com for more information.

GONG

UNENDING ASCENDING

Gong return with interstellar new album 'Unending Ascending', an eclectic eight-song cycle that forms a pan-galactic suite, veering between the ecstatic, apocalyptic, meditative and catchy, often within the same song.

3RD NOVEMBER Limited edition green LP / LP / CD / digital

ORIC TENTACLES

LOTUS UNFOLDING

The legendary instrumental, experimental and progressive outfit return with their sixteenth full length album 'Lotus Unfolding', the perfect conduit of the spiritual and the physical. It's an essential addition to the band's catalogue

OUT NOW Limited edition Blue LP with die cut sleeve / Limited edition Green marble vinyl LP with die cut sleeve / LP / CD / digital

ORIC TENTACLES GONG

2023 UK TOUR 2023

17.11 **OXFORD**, 02 Academy2
18.11 **LONDON**, 02 Forum with the Crazy World of Arthur Brown
19.11 **MANCHESTER**, 02 Ritz
20.11 **SHEFFIELD**, 02 Academy2
21.11 **COLCHESTER**, Arts Centre
23.11 **NORTHAMPTON**, Roadmender
24.11 **BRISTOL**, 02 Academy
25.11 **GLOUCESTER**, Guildhall
26.11 **BIRMINGHAM**, 02 Academy2
28.11 **BRIGHTON**, Chalk
29.11 **NORWICH**, Epic Studios
30.11 **BOURNEMOUTH**, 02 Academy
01.12 **FROME**, Cheese & Grain
02.12 **LIVERPOOL**, 02 Academy

2024 UK TOUR 2024

07.03 **EXETER**, The Phoenix
08.03 **FALMOUTH**, Princess Pavilion
09.03 **LYME REGIS**, Marine Theatre
10.03 **CARDIFF**, The Globe
11.03 **SWANSEA**, Patti Pavilion
13.03 **SOUTHAMPTON**, The 1865
14.03 **MARGATE**, Dreamland
15.03 **HULL**, The Welly
16.03 **NOTTINGHAM**, Rescue Rooms
17.03 **STOCKTON-on-tees**, Georgian Theatre
18.03 **LINCOLN**, Engine Shed
20.03 **LEEDS**, Brudenell
21.03 **NEWCASTLE**, University
22.03 **GLASGOW**, St. Luke's
23.03 **EDINBURGH**, Summerhall

MARIUSZ DUDA AFR AI D

Riverside / Lunatic Soul creative force Mariusz Duda continues his electronic path initiated by his Lockdown Trilogy.

17th November

Limited edition magenta LP / LP / CD / digital

bruce soord

luminescence

NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

"...a soaring intimate record that easily ranks among Soord's best." **CLASSIC ROCK**

TESSERACT

WAR OF BEING

NEW ALBUM OUT NOW

"...not only TesseracT's most accomplished record to date, but it's one that adds greater extravagance wonder and distinction" **PROG**

kscope For more information on these titles, and many more visit www.kscopemusic.com

In Bloom

Sixteen studio albums in and **The Flower Kings** show no signs of slowing down. Mainman Roine Stolt is clearly relishing one of his most creative periods with an ongoing reissues campaign and the release of *Look At You Now*. *Prog* finds out about the latest record, gets the lowdown on his creative partnership with Jon Anderson and discovers whether he really has made his *Final Flight* with supergroup Transatlantic.

Words: Paul Ging **Images:** Lilian Forsberg

When *Prog* checks in with Roine Stolt, he's in fine form. The Flower Kings mainman is anticipating the release of his band's 16th studio album and he's just recently seen friend and collaborator Jon Anderson's Close To The Edge 51st anniversary live show in his native Uppsala. He has much to say about their ongoing work together (of which more later). He also has comments about the apparently defunct Transatlantic's swansong tour and rumoured last ever concert, recorded for posterity as *The Final Flight*, plus The Flower Kings' reissue programme.

But, amid arrangements he's making for his primary band's autumn tour, he's buzzing about the new album *Look At You Now* and reacts with delight when told this writer's eight-year-old described the record as "forest music, because you're surrounded and there's lots of different things to look at".

"That's beautiful," he says with a smile. "I think that's really interesting. Kids have no filter, it's from the heart."

Look At You Now is the fourth album under the banner of The Flower Kings since the group's 2018 relaunch, making an average of one album every two years since 1994, despite gaps in activity. Quite the work rate.

"I guess I'm just a guy that writes a lot of songs," Roine considers. "There's usually a pile sitting there, some to use now and some five years from now."

Combining material from different eras helps to bring diversity to the albums, partly due to Stolt being in a different headspace.

Current album *Look At You Now*.

"When [Jon Anderson and I] met the other day, we were saying, 'We've got to finish our album!' Just a month ago, he sent me something and I worked on it."

Roine Stolt: here's looking at you now!

"Things change and the way I wrote songs 20 years ago, or even four years ago, was quite different," he affirms.

However, in the case of the latest record, the musician has stretched way back: "On this album's opening track [first single, *Beginner's Eyes*], there are elements written before the very first Flower Kings album! The first chords are from something I wrote 30 years ago. When we'd recorded it, [the rest of the band] said, 'That's a great opening track for the album. It has a positive vibe.'"

But it's not all positive vibes in Flower King Land. Many fans and critics commented on themes of isolation in 2020's epic *Islands* and increasingly darker preoccupations on last year's *By Royal Decree,* and Stolt makes no apologies for this.

"That's the way I write now because of everything around me. It could be music, art, the shape of the world, wars, uncertainties [such as] global warming. There's the polarisation of politics and countries in Europe turning to the Right. That comes into the lyrics, one way or another."

"I guess I'm just a guy that writes a lot of songs. There's usually a pile sitting there, some to use now and some five years from now."

There's often been a plea for peace and understanding in the band's output, but that's also more pronounced now, he says: "Why don't we come to our senses and try to be nice? Let people exist: if they want to dress different or be a different sex, let people be whatever they want to be."

Much of this hoping for a better and more tolerant world feeds directly into second single, *The Dream*. The musician explains that, as the title suggests, the song actually came from a nocturnal manifestation: "Sometimes I dream music. You wake up and you think, 'This is so damn good, I'm gonna remember this.' Then you wake up again later, at whatever time, and it's gone."

"But this time, it was probably around 5:30 in the morning and I was dreaming about writing this song and remembered some words. So I got up and went into my studio here at home and I thought, 'I better play it, to not forget it.'"

Although Stolt is Swedish born and bred, he writes mainly in English. Did he dream the lyrics in the language he writes in, or his native tongue?

"Ha! The reality of it is, there are so many people I work with these days, such as Transatlantic and Jon Anderson and one year touring with Steve Hackett, you start thinking in English. It's probably harder for me to write in Swedish these days. We did a reunion album with [Stolt's earlier band] Kaipa and sung in Swedish. I enjoyed that, but over the last 25 years, my brain [has been] set to think of music in English and of course because of all the music I grew up with: Beatles, Buffalo Springfield, Vanilla Fudge, Frank Zappa, Yes, King Crimson, great lyrics in English. So I dreamt *The Dream* in English."

Prog wonders if that song's hopeful sentiment also fed into the album title, which doesn't appear elsewhere on the record?

"The title came by coincidence. I had the artwork sent to me and I just wanted to show it to the guys with The Flower Kings logo on. I just put in a fake title, which was *Look At You Now*. And then when we started talking about album titles, we looked at the song titles and phrases from the lyrics. But someone said, 'The title you had on the mock-up is really good!' [It] can mean us looking at the audience, the audience looking at us, or all of us looking at the world the way it is now."

It's not just the album's title, but the cover art — showing a giant eye surrounded by petals bursting from a heart — that came about by happenstance as well.

"This guy [Joey Tessier] sent some of his own artwork and told the story about his father [Gino Tessier] who'd been a huge Flower Kings fan [and had worked] as a stunt flyer, flying planes with smoke coming out. He wasn't trying to sell me something. The story was in honour of his father and everyone in the band liked the artwork, so why not?"

Roine has regularly played keyboards on The Flower Kings' records, but ended up playing most of the lines on *Look At You Now*.

"We brought in Lalle Larsson, who used to play with [Swedish symphonic proggers] Karmakanic and when we had Agents Of Mercy, he was the keyboard player with us in that, so we've known each other for a long time," he explains. "So, it dawned on me that we could bring him in to play a few keyboard solos because I'm not a great solo guy. I play the majority, but Michael [original bassist and Roine's brother] plays a little bit too. On the tour, we'll have Lalle again. We had an American keyboard guy [Zach Kamins] for a couple of years and it proved to be impossible because of Covid [restrictions] and flying someone over from California to rehearse, so we just had to part ways."

In addition to creating new material, Stolt's also been overseeing an extensive reissue programme of Flower Kings albums. It's been well-received by fans and critics, and includes first-time vinyl issues for some items.

"The label [InsideOutMusic] asked if we would look at the back catalogue. I said, 'I'm fine with that, but if we do vinyl, I'd look to look at the recordings, the mixes and the mastering because some of it sounds a bit harsh now, a bit too compressed.' I thought I could do better with the equipment I have now.

L-R: Michael Stolt, Mirko DeMaio, Hasse Fröberg, Roine Stolt, Lalle Larsson.

"But then I had to look for the original tapes!" he says with a laugh. "The very first albums, *Back In The World Of Adventures* and *Retropolis*, they were recorded on reel-to-reel. I needed to find them, to see if they were in good enough condition."

Once located, some of the tapes had to be heat-treated to become playable again. So did Stolt send them away for state-of-the-art restoration?

"I did it in my kitchen!" he laughs. "I went online and there was a studio guy saying, 'You don't need to send them anywhere, do you have an oven? Do it overnight and you're good to go!' Chef Roine! [Laughs.] It worked out."

Since unearthing his back catalogue, the bandleader's been pleasantly surprised by albums he didn't originally rate back in the day.

"I wasn't 100 per cent happy with *Adam & Eve* [2004] or *The Rainmaker* [2001]. But listening to them now, it struck me how good they are, really strong songs and also the recording and playing. The drummer [on *Adam & Eve*] – Zoltan Csörsz – plays great. He wasn't really there in spirit because he didn't really like progressive rock, but he did a great job. And some of the first albums with [former bassist and current Steve Hackett sideman] Jonas [Reingold], he played great bass. So those albums are better than I thought."

Could he imagine working with Reingold again?

"It's absolutely possible, but as it is, he's out with Steve Hackett doing all those Genesis albums: *The Lamb…*, *Selling England…*, *Foxtrot*." Stolt smiles mischievously. "Hey, maybe even *We Can't Dance*! [laughs] Although probably not that one!"

On the subject of reissues, the Anderson/Stolt album *Invention Of Knowledge* has just been dusted off to great renewed acclaim. Is there any chance of a belated follow-up?

"When we met the other day, we were saying, 'We've got to finish our album!' Just a month ago, he sent me something and I worked on it. And I'd forgotten that I'd sent him this big symphonic piece and suddenly, he sent something back that was spoken word over that.

"We started working on album number two before he went back to do [Anderson's 2019 album] *1000 Hands: Chapter One* and I went back to Transatlantic. So I think I just need to step in and just [finish] it. It can be done, hopefully."

Even if not for Anderson/Stolt and his outstanding track record with The Flower Kings, Stolt would still be a prog hero to many as a member of supergroup Transatlantic, which must have been a fantastic experience.

"It was, but [the last tour] was a little bit under-rehearsed, to be honest. Once we got to Europe it was sounding better. The very last show we did in Paris was really good and the live album and video [of it] is very good. I remember standing there in Paris at the Olympia, knowing that we'd played a good show and that it could have been different, could have been a disaster. But we played well and the audience reaction was fantastic, so it was a good bookending."

No fan ever wants to believe it's ever finally over. Is there any chance Transatlantic could take off again?

"When I look at all the projects we're all working on, chances are slim," he says. "But never say never."

For now, though, Stolt is continuing to bloom with The Flower Kings. And just look at them now.

Look At You Now is out now via InsideOutMusic. See www.roinestolt.com for more information.

Dreaming From The Inside

Galahad are clearly enjoying being in the same room again.

"Our fan demographic has sort of grown old with us and are still interested in buying physical formats."

Stu Nicholson

As they approach their 40th anniversary, **Galahad** are facing new challenges as an independent British band. Current release *The Long Goodbye* finds them with a stable line-up and embracing modified recording techniques. *Prog* catches up with vocalist Stu Nicholson and keyboard player Dean Baker to find out about their future plans.

Words: Chris Wheatley
Images: Donna Nicholson

The last few years have been turbulent for the music industry, with Brexit, Covid and the rise to dominance of streaming services shaking up the landscape. Having been a going concern since 1985, and remarkably consistent in their output, prog rockers Galahad have seen it all. They're now back with a new album, *The Long Goodbye*, a companion record to 2022's stirring *The Last Great Adventurer*.

"Enthusiasm," says co-founding vocalist Stu Nicholson, when asked about his personal journey into the business, which started, appropriately enough, with hearing Genesis for the first time. "In the late 70s," he recalls, "I remember very clearly being at a friend's house and we were playing pool. We were a bit drunk, and I was sitting under the table. He put on *Selling England By The Pound* and I heard the first words: *'Can you tell me where my country lies.'* I just loved it. And I was hooked."

Fast forward a few years and prog, as Nicholson rightly observes, "was a bit of a dirty word." The 80s were the glory days of post-punk and new wave, but Nicholson was undeterred. "Roy [Keyworth, a fellow founding member] wanted to set up a band that was progressive rock," he says, "because there were literally no other groups like that in the area. And so he did. I answered an ad. We all got on and, as they say, the rest is history."

Dean Baker, by contrast was a later addition to the band, and also a latecomer to prog.

"I was a massive Beatles fan," the keyboard player explains thoughtfully. "I was into a lot of new romantic bands." Fate intervened in '96, when an acquaintance working at a nearby studio put Baker onto a local band that was seeking a keyboardist. That band were Galahad. "I went up and met Stuart and Roy and we just hit it off." They went straight to work on *Following Ghosts* and, although receiving a prog education 'on the job', Baker was impressed by the freedom.

"What was amazing to me," he says, "is that Stu and Roy were very much: 'Off you go, do something. You have complete free rein. If you want to make the intro three minutes long, make it three minutes long.'" Released in '98, *Following Ghosts* was remastered in 2007, with an expanded edition appearing in 2020. It remains a fan favourite.

***The Long Goodbye* is out now.**

studio, because you've always got the clock ticking."

Despite their longevity, Galahad have always managed to sound fresh, and this new method has clearly added a little extra. With the various contributions collated, the results were sent off to audio engineer Karl Groom, whom Nicholson describes as "a musical alchemist." Ending up with an abundance of strong material, Galahad decided to split the results over two albums, *The Last Great Adventurer* and *The Long Goodbye*.

Although neither is a concept album as such, both records contain unifying elements.

"Sometimes the music just has a life of its own," muses Nicholson. "Suddenly you realise that there's some kind of connection between these songs, which, when you're writing them, you're not aware of."

L-R: Spencer Luckman, Mark Spencer, Stu Nicholson, Dean Baker, Lee Abraham.

Fast forward 25 years and Galahad have undergone further line-up changes, but have a settled roster of Nicholson, Baker, Spencer Luckman (drums), Lee Abraham (guitars) and Mark Spencer (bass). As was the case with *The Last Great Adventurer*, much of the music for *The Long Goodbye* was recorded during lockdown, which necessitated a change of approach.

"I had already set myself up with Pro Tools," says Nicholson, "but it came into its own during the Covid emergency. We'd started work on new material, then of course everything stopped." Galahad, however, decided to keep at it. "We've all got set-ups at home," says Baker, "so we could remotely do most of the work."

As the pair explain, although adapting to this new way of working was challenging, it also brought some unexpected benefits.

"For vocals," says Nicholson, "I did lots of different takes. And it's quite unnerving doing it on your own, because you haven't got anyone to say, 'Well that doesn't sound right.'"

The singer recorded over rough demos, which Baker would shape around the vocals, an approach that Nicholson ultimately found rather liberating.

"I had time to experiment," he says, "which is something I've never really done in the

Since the departure of Roy Keyworth, Nicholson and Baker have taken on chief songwriting duties, but this is a band that, despite a rich past, are always looking to move ahead.

"Now we've got a pretty stable line-up, it's quite exciting," adds Nicholson. "We're looking forward to writing with Lee, who is a great writer, and also Mark, our bass guitarist, who has lots of ideas."

Galahad are relishing a return to live playing. They have dates set up in the UK, with hopefully more to follow in Europe, despite the spiralling costs post-Brexit.

"Visas are a big problem," admits Nicholson. Which brings us round to the thorny subject of making a living as an independent act.

Since their earliest days, Galahad have released music via their own label, Avalon. Such freedom brings its own headaches, however as all their CDs and vinyl are produced via a plant in Poland.

"Vinyl is slightly cheaper to manufacture over there," the singer explains, "but all the big companies have cottoned on to it, so the pressing plants have been clogged up by big artists wanting to press hundreds of thousands of albums."

When Galahad first returned to vinyl, issuing an album took six to eight weeks. Now, Nicholson reveals, "It's taken six months to get *The Last Great Adventurer* pressed."

Then there's the internet. "In one way it's great," observes Nicholson, "because it means that you're on the same level as big bands. You've got the same opportunities to get your stuff out there. The problem is, there's so much available that the market is completely saturated. It's a very strange situation."

Both Nicholson and Baker express doubts as to the benefits of streaming services, but being a band with loyal fans gives Galahad an edge.

"We're lucky," says the vocalist, "in that our fan demographic has sort of grown old with us and are still interested in buying physical formats."

He also speaks highly of distribution site Bandcamp "because they pay reasonable rates, far better than some of the other platforms. But we encourage people generally to buy directly from our own website."

"It's so disheartening to see streaming now, but even I'm guilty of it. I have every album by Muse except the last one, because I can listen to it via streaming."
Dean Baker

"It's so disheartening to see streaming now," adds Baker, "but even I'm guilty of it. I have every album by Muse except the last one, because I can listen to it via streaming."

"I'd hate to be a new band," adds Nicholson, "I don't know how you can even contemplate making a living out of this anymore. You've got the whole touring thing, but it's a fine line. Even some of the bigger bands are saying that their productions cost so much that they only just about break even, but, of course," he adds, whimsically, "most of those have already made their money, so it doesn't matter."

Nicholson and Baker end with a tantalising hint as to future projects.

"We've got a lot of new material we've been working on," says Nicholson, "and we've also started an EP of covers of American artists." Those artists tentatively include The Flaming Lips, Bruce Springsteen and Johnny Cash. In their fifth decade, then, Galahad continue to seek new modes of expression, and look set to remain a vital force for some time.

The Long Goodbye is out now through Avalon Records, the digital edition will follow on November 10 and the vinyl later this year. See www.galahadonline.com for more information.

THE CHRONICLES OF FATHER ROBIN OUT NOW!

THE SONGS & TALES OF AIROEA - BOOK 1

With members from Wobbler, Tusmørke, Jordsjø and The Samuel Jackson Five, this is a progressive folkrock supergroup! This is the first part of the "The Songs & Tales of Airoea" trilogy, a massive work that has been 30 years in the making!

JORDSJØ OUT NOW!

SALIGHET

With "Salighet", Jordsjø explore different forms of ecstasy through compositions and lyrics. Be it in the shape of dance, a mountain hike, a fairytale, religious pondering or other kinds of inner travels, in a colourful symphonic folk-rock sound.

ERLAND DAHLEN OUT 27.10!

RACOONS

The fifth solo album from drummer extraordinaire Erland Dahlen. He has played on more than 300 albums with a variety of artists in different genres, with everyone from Mike Patton to Madrugada. For fans of Jaga Jazzist, Eivind Aarseth, Nils Petter Molvær.

WHITE WILLOW OUT 03.11!

IGNIS FATUUS

The classic debut album from Norwegian prog legends White Willow. Originally released in the spring of 1995, the album took the global progressive rock scene by storm. This re-release was meticulously remastered by the band's own Jacob Holm-Lupo, and is presented with the classic original cover art, for the first time on vinyl.

is it JAZZ? RECORDS / isitjazzrecords.no

karisma RECORDS KARISMARECORDS.NO

DISTRIBUTED BY: PHD

SOURCE

EMERGENCE

THE 4TH STUDIO ALBUM FROM SOURCE

"EMERGENCE"

NOW AVAILALBE ON ALL PLATFORMS

SCAN ME

OR GO TO

SOLO.TO/LISTENTOSOURCE

FOR ALL STREAMING AND SOCIAL MEDIA LINKS

THE PROG INTERVIEW

TREVOR RABIN

Every month we get inside the mind of one of the biggest names in music. This issue it's **Trevor Rabin**. The South African-born musician and composer is best known in prog circles for his work with Yes in the 80s and early 90s, but he began his musical journey at a very young age, joining several rock bands in his home country before eventually finding success after he relocated to California. Since the mid-90s, his name has popped up on film soundtrack scores, his credits including action movie *Gone In 60 Seconds* and the remake of Disney's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. He was part of ARW with former Yes members Rick Wakeman and Jon Anderson and, although the project didn't yield any recorded material, he's since turned his attentions back to his solo work, with the new album, *Rio*. He discusses his remarkable career so far and where he hopes his current path will lead.

Words: Stephen Lambe

Whether you think that Trevor Rabin was the man who ruined Yes or the lifeline that saved the band from oblivion in the 1980s, there's no denying his virtuosity or his ability to write a decent tune. But the South African has always been a far more interesting and stylistically varied musician than he's often given credit for.

Born in Johannesburg in 1954, Rabin grew up in a liberal, musical household during the apartheid era and learned classical piano from the age of six. Taking up the guitar six years later, it soon became his obsession. Rabin first pursued a career as a session musician in South Africa and then formed the successful band Rabbitt in the early 70s. A move to London towards the end of the decade saw him sign to Chrysalis and release three solo albums in a hard rock/AOR style before moving briefly into production work with Manfred Mann's Earth Band and Thin Lizzy offshoot Wild Horses. A sudden relocation to LA on a songwriting development deal with Geffen led to short-lived rehearsals with Asia, followed by the formation of Cinema with Alan White, Chris Squire and Tony Kaye, which morphed into a new version of Yes when Jon Anderson joined in 1983. This collaboration produced the hit album *90125* and the US No.1 single *Owner Of A Lonely Heart*, while Rabin's good looks and guitar heroics helped win the band a legion of new followers. Yes remained the mainstay of his career until 1995 via three further albums: the problematic *Big Generator* in 1987; the controversial *Union* in 1991, which saw Rabin, Squire and White's Yes join forces with Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman, Howe; and finally the underrated *Talk* in 1994. Between Yes projects, an excellent solo album, *Can't Look Away*, was released in 1989.

Rabin's new solo album, Rio.

Moving on from Yes in the mid-90s, a chance meeting with movie star Steven Seagal led to a brand-new career in movie and TV soundtracks. These have mainly defined Rabin's subsequent career path, with high-profile commissions including a fruitful collaboration with producer Jerry Bruckheimer via *National Treasure*, *Enemy Of The State* and *Gone In 60 Seconds*. However, Rabin's career as a rock musician was not yet at an end, with the well-received all-instrumental solo album *Jacaranda* released in 2012. Rabin also returned to live performance with Jon Anderson and Rick Wakeman in ARW playing Yes material live during 2017 and 2018.

> *Talk* was harmonious in a lot of ways because Jon and I became friends in the same way I already was with the rest of the band.

Sadly, ARW failed to release any new music, but Rabin's creative juices were once again flowing in the direction of songwriting. It's led to his most recent project, the new album *Rio*, his first solo vocal record since *Can't Look Away*. When *Prog* catches up with him, it's early in the day at his California home, but the multi-instrumentalist, still looking remarkably youthful at 69 – is alert, enthusiastic and friendly.

You grew up in South Africa during the apartheid years. What was life like, and how did that impact your musical upbringing?
I was acutely aware of everything that was happening. It was a really strange time, but when I was growing up, there was a real effort to make things feel normal, even though there was a huge amount of segregation. These things were especially noticeable because

Yes, L-R: Alan White, Chris Squire, Trevor Rabin, Jon Anderson and Tony Kaye at Ahoy, Rotterdam, Netherlands on July 1, 1984.

ROB VERHORST/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

PETE CRONIN/ICONICPIX

Big hair, bigger talent: Trevor Rabin in 1989.

my father was very liberal-leaning and my family was very involved in the anti-apartheid struggle. My uncle is Sir Sydney Kentridge, who was Nelson Mandela's lawyer and prosecuted on behalf of Steve Biko's family, and one of my first bands was called Freedom's Children. I wrote a political song called *State Of Fear*, which didn't make me very popular, as you might guess. When I first moved to London, I had a call from Peter Gabriel. I thought, "Oh wow, I didn't think things would happen this quickly."

Strike a pose! Rabin at a London photoshoot in 1978.

GODDARD ARCHIVE/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

But he wanted to ask about my other uncle, Donald Woods, who wrote the book *Cry Freedom* about his escape from South Africa.

Amongst the white South Africans, American music wasn't very big. We believed that the real rock music came from Britain. For me, my first influences were Led Zeppelin and Cream and I always looked upon Jimi Hendrix as being English because that's where he first broke as a star. But I was also really into jazz. My dad [Godfrey] was the leader of the Johannesburg Symphony and, because of that background, I could read music before I could read English. But of course, I was a kid, so I wanted to go off to play rugby. I just wasn't allowed until I'd done an hour's piano practice!

Your first band, Rabbitt, were a massive success in South Africa. How did that come about?

When I was about 14, I hadn't been playing guitar long, and I got together with some local guys. The three of us – guitar, bass and drums – were the essence of the band, and eventually, we got a fourth member to bring vocal harmonies and keyboards. Later, I fell into a lot of sessions, and one of the producers that I became friendly with was [South African songwriter and producer] Patric van Blerk, who decided to take a chance on the band. You have to remember that at that time, nobody in South Africa was doing original music, so we had to play at really seedy clubs because I didn't want to do covers. We did a nine-month residency in one particular club and our reputation grew and grew, so, in the end, we had to get the material down on tape. We made the first album, *Boys Will Be Boys!* in one week with a great engineer, Julian Laxton, who really understood the band. It's why that album still sounds so good today.

Given how successful Rabbitt were, what made you try your luck in the UK?

The political situation was a big part of it, but as much as anything, it was because we were a big fish in a small pond – our success was limited to South Africa and Rhodesia [now Zimbabwe]. I wanted to stretch myself and try something else. The band were nervous about that, so I went alone.

That move to London was in the very late 1970s, just as the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal was gaining steam. Did you feel like a part of it?

Yes, at least partly. I started out doing four tracks with a band called Export, and I almost worked with Def Leppard and Michael Schenker. I also ended up producing Wild Horses, so I was quite heavily involved in it around that time. I also hung out with Phil Lynott a lot. I loved him.

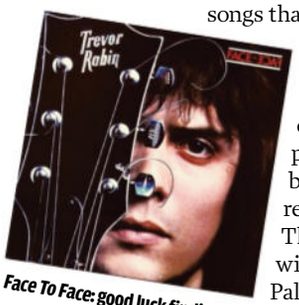
After you recorded your first solo album, *Beginnings*, in South Africa, you got signed to Chrysalis and recorded *Face To Face* and *Wolf*. You released the box set of your solo stuff a while ago, but individually they're hard to get. Do you feel there's still a market for them?

Sure. Funnily enough, a friend of mine recently told me how hard they were to get. I'm just a bit of a procrastinator, so I haven't really kept on top of that. I really need to do that, so watch this space!

After those albums, you moved to the US. How did that come about?

It came out of the blue. I really liked working with Chrysalis on those albums I recorded in the UK, but around the same time I was producing Manfred Mann's Earth Band, I met John Kalodner, who was an executive for Geffen. Geffen had only just started out, and they were in the process of signing people like Elton John and Donna Summer. John asked me if I had any material, and I said I was writing for another album, but Chrysalis had dropped me. Suddenly, I'm in the back of a car with David Geffen, signing a development contract. It was quite a shock. My wife and I were settled in Stanmore [in Middlesex], and the next thing we knew, we were in California!

I carried on writing, but John decided he wanted to put me with some different people. Some of those guys weren't a great fit, but one project involved John Wetton, and I got on quite well with him. That project petered out, but as I was taking a bit longer to produce songs than Geffen hoped, I think they got a bit impatient, and I was pretty much ordered to go and play with another band that were rehearsing in London. This turned out to be with Steve Howe, Carl Palmer, Geoff Downes and John Wetton. I was told that if I didn't do it, I'd be dropped. I decided to give it a go as I was quite friendly with John and Carl. I flew to London apprehensively and we had a few



Face To Face: good luck finding it!

A man very much in his element.

PRESS/HRISTO SHINDOV

> I just want to do whatever I can to support [*Rio*] and then do another one when the time is right. That's my priority and my passion.

rehearsals, but when I flew back to the USA, I told them I wasn't doing it. There's a clip on YouTube of me singing one of the songs that turned up on the first Asia album, and you can tell from the performance that I'm not singing with much zest. So Ed Rosenblatt, the head of finance at Geffen, called me and nonchalantly told me that I was dropped. I felt a kind of release because I felt possessive about all the material I'd written, and I didn't want it to go to the wrong place.

So, the Geffen deal ended but you were still in California. It must have been an uncertain time. What happened next?

I started sending out demo tapes. The irony is that I sent out all this material that was going to end up on *90125*, like *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* and *Changes* and they were rejected. I've still got the letter from Clive Davis of Arista saying, "While we feel your voice has Top 40 appeal, we feel [*Owner Of A Lonely Heart*] is too left-field for the marketplace today."

There was talk of a band with myself, Keith Emerson, Cozy Powell and Jack Bruce. I already knew Jack through Cream and because he'd played on my album, *Wolf*. I loved Keith, too, but that idea didn't move forward for a while. Then Ron Fair, a fantastic A&R guy at RCA, offered me a deal, so I had the option of that, the band with Keith and Jack, or the possibility of a band with Chris Squire and Alan White via Phil Carson at Atlantic, who had also heard the demos. In the end, Phil Carson – who's a pretty persuasive guy – called me up and said, "Come on, stop fucking around", so the next thing I knew, I was in a sushi restaurant in Shepherd's Bush with Chris and Alan. We had a play together, and while it didn't sound particularly good, it just felt right. To this day, I really miss Chris and Alan; the three-piece juggernaut, as I used to call us. I just loved playing with them.

You ended up back in London once again with Chris and Alan. How did Tony Kaye come on board?

When we started playing at John Henrys, this big rehearsal studio in Islington, Chris suggested Tony. I didn't know him, but Chris said that he was a 'meat and potato' keyboard player, a real Hammond guy. He said, "I think he'll be right for the band because you're a little fancy!" [Laughs.]

Eventually, Atlantic came to see us and ended up signing us. Next, we had to think about a producer. Chris asked me how I felt about Trevor Horn producing the band. I was really apprehensive, and Tony Kaye wasn't into the idea at all, but in the end, I just decided to get my head down and do what I could to make the album work.

What was your perspective on how Jon Anderson came on board, which led to Cinema becoming Yes?

We'd finished the album when Jon came back. All the

overdubs were done, although Tony Kaye had left for a while, which forced me to do a lot of the keyboards. Atlantic said that even though they felt very secure about the record, why didn't we get Jon Anderson in the band so we could call it Yes? So I said, "So, what you're saying is you want to fire me as the singer?" I meant it semi tongue-in-cheek as I've never been too proud or jealous about being the singer in any band I'm in. That said, I've always felt that the album would have done really well without us calling the band Yes.

> Phil Carson called me up and said, 'Come on, stop fucking around,' so the next thing I knew, I was in a sushi restaurant in Shepherd's Bush with Chris Squire and Alan White.

How did you deal with having to play Yes songs on the road?

It didn't start well. My wife and I went to Florida just before the tour, and I had an accident in a swimming pool when a woman came down a water slide and hit me, which led to my spleen having to be removed. So the tour was delayed, and in the meantime, I'd barely played the guitar, and I certainly hadn't played any of the older Yes stuff. I'd never really wanted to call the band Yes in the first place, so now I was stuck with playing some old Yes material in what I considered to be a new band. So Chris said, "You choose what you want to play, and if there are other songs we feel we have to play, we'll talk about it." On the plane to Philadelphia, I came up with some ideas. Of course, my guitar style is totally different from Steve Howe and Peter Banks; I'd never even considered playing like those guys, so Chris just said, "Do it your way." That made me feel warmer, and it made the tour much easier.

1987's difficult Big Generator.

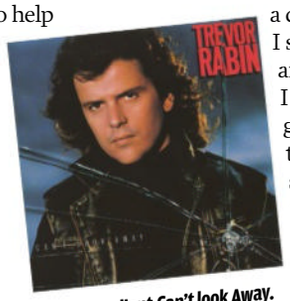
After the tour, you recorded a follow-up album. *Big Generator* was famously a difficult record to make, wasn't it?

When an album comes out and it's so successful and the process of making it has been so peculiar, you then realise that you have a bunch of guys that have never really worked together apart from being onstage. I didn't really know Jon at all, but by this stage, Chris was like a brother to me, and that continued after I left the band. I loved Alan and Tony too. For the next album, the record company – who had no idea what had gone down during the recording of *90125* – suggested Trevor Horn again. Tony said, "No way," but it became clear that Trevor was going to do it, but he wasn't going to work well with Tony. He wanted me to do most of the keyboards again.

We had an offer to record the album at a castle in Italy, and I thought that was a good idea. Unfortunately, it was a bit of a party period, so very little was achieved. In terms of writing together, there was no cohesiveness whatsoever, and the atmosphere between certain people was very toxic. I have to say that onstage, Tony Kaye was just perfect for the band. He couldn't have been better. But in the studio, it wasn't quite the same. At one point during *Big Generator*, he was in one room working while I was in another room, both playing keyboards. After their experience on *90125*, the bad blood between Tony and Trevor was there from the start. Trevor and I would listen to Tony's parts, and I wouldn't always like what I was hearing, but I would be diplomatic because I didn't want to be anti-Tony. It was all very delicate.

You moved back to London for a while, and then when Horn left the project, you ended up in Los Angeles. What happened?

To cut a long story short, a friend of mine from South Africa, Paul De Villiers, came in to help finish the recording in California, and in the end I went into Sunset Sound in LA and said, "Just leave me alone, and let me finish it." It was the only option we had to get a completed album. But, actually, I really enjoyed working on the record on my own.



1989's excellent Can't look Away.

After *Big Generator*, you ended up recording another solo album, *Can't Look Away*, with Bob Ezrin producing. Why did you pick that time for a solo project?

There was some disillusionment after *Big Generator*, for which I'd been a salvage producer, if anything, so I wanted to break out and do my own record. I had some things to say about South Africa that I felt guilty about not saying before. That's what I was doing with songs like the title track and *Sorrow (Your Heart)*. I was commenting on the political situation. I toured that album and did a video for *Something To Hold On To*. It was nominated for a Grammy, but the director, Jeff Stein should take all the credit. That track did really well. In fact, Elektra did a fine job with that album, but then I got sucked into the Union tour, and my solo career stalled for a while.

What is your view of the *Union* album?

I had written *Miracle Of Life* and *Lift Me Up* and, out of the blue, Clive Davis of Arista called me and asked, "Do you have any singles? We are doing an Anderson, Bruford, Wakeman, Howe album, and we need a couple more songs." I sent him *Lift Me Up* and he wanted it. I said that I wasn't giving it away but that I'd happily write something else for the band. But in the end, management got involved, we were offered this amazing tour, and I ended up handing in three songs for the album. I had nothing to do with it apart from that. I didn't hear the rest of *Union* at the time, and I had no input into the sequencing. I just mastered my songs and made sure they got to the right place at the right time.

After the Union tour, the band slimmed down to the *90125* line-up, and recorded *Talk* for Phil Carson's Victory label. It feels

STEPHANIE CABRAL
Trevor and Rick getting up close and personal with the fans in 2017.

A happy and relaxed Trevor Rabin earlier this year.

PRESS/HRISTO SHINDOV

like a more cohesive album than *Big Generator*. Was it?
Partially, I think. Jon and I did go to stay by the sea in Carmel in California and, for the first time, learned from each other as people and got on really well. We wrote some stuff together, most of which didn't appear on the album. But the guys were really supportive of the new way we were recording it, to hard disk. Eventually, Phil Carson said, "I need a long song," and that became *Endless Dream*. *Talk* was harmonious in a lot of ways because Jon and I became friends in the same way I already was with the rest of the band.

After *Talk*, you left the band and started your very long and fruitful career recording film soundtracks. But you returned to touring as Anderson, Rabin, Wakeman in 2017. How did that come about, and how did you feel about it becoming another Yes?
One of the pleasures of the Union tour was how well Rick Wakeman and I got on. When we did the Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame performance in 2017, we hadn't seen each other for a while, so the three of us discussed doing a tour together. So Brian Lane became our manager and offered us the tour. Working with Rick again was always on my bucket list, so I said, "I'm in." I felt the same about calling it Yes as I did with *90125*. Neither Rick nor I thought it was necessary. It diminished the seriousness and impact of what we were trying to do, I think.

1994's *Talk*: "Harmonious."

Does any of the material on your new album *Rio* stem from the ARW period?
Some of it, yes. There's a bonus track on the album that came from that time, called *Fragile*. Although I had other material, I really thought this song would lend itself to ARW. We actually rehearsed it, and we were planning on playing it on tour, but we never even released it in the end. There's also a string piece I did at the end of the track *Push* that we used to open the ARW shows, alongside an orchestral version of *Perpetual Change* that I arranged.

Why did you pick now as the time to do your first vocal album since 1989's *Can't Look Away*?
I often use guitar in my film soundtracks, but I was playing it less and less on a day-to-day basis. Ultimately, I got to a point when I really wanted to break out and play, so I started practising properly again. This is why I put together my instrumental album, *Jacaranda*, which is all playing – there are no sequencers of any sort. So with *Rio*, I had the same thought, except I wanted to sing. I decided there would be no tuning of the vocals. If a vocal performance didn't work, I'd do it again. The same applies to the backing vocals on the album, but thankfully I'm very used to recording those, so I'm pretty quick. I was absolutely determined that everything would be played. After 50 films, I was sick and tired of the sonic manipulation that is inevitable in film scoring.

There's a really high line at the start of the song *Push* from *Rio* that sounds like it's something Jon Anderson might have sung.
My son said exactly the same thing – and pointed out how high I was singing. I said, "I can sing high, but in Yes, Jon sang like that, so I didn't bother!" [Laughs.]

***Rio* is quite an intense listen – there are a huge number of genres on the album, sometimes within the same song. An example would be the three different sections of *Tumbleweed*. Was that intentional?**
Some of the genre-bending was down to how I was feeling in that particular week. But you are right – I almost called the album *Demographic Nightmare* because I'm so interested in many different types of music. I wanted to do *me*, whatever that means, and visit all kinds of different places, while still basing it in prog rock, if you like. But I wanted to do some country and all kinds of other things. I do accept it might be demographically confusing.

One of this writer's favourite tracks on *Can't Look Away* is *Sorrow (Your Heart)*, which has a wonderful African influence. It was great to hear you revisiting that on the track *Egoli*.
I agree. Egoli is the Swahili name for Johannesburg, and it means something like 'Land Of Gold'. It was great to do another piece like that.

What's next for you? More soundtrack work? A tour? Another solo album?
I loved making this album. I needed it after so many years doing film scores. I just beg people to listen to it more than four times and give it time to get used to it. I've never done an album in my life where I haven't been grateful that I got away with it without killing myself. As to whether to tour it, it's too early to say, and as for more soundtrack work, at the moment, the actors' and writers' strike is on, so there's not a lot happening. But even without that, I just want to do whatever I can to support this album and then do another one when the time is right. That's my priority and my passion.

Rio is out now via InsideOutMusic. Head over to www.facebook.com/TrevorRabinMusic for more information.

STEVEN WILSON

Modern prog's great visionary throws away the stylistic rule book to deliver an enigmatic, luxurious post-pandemic masterwork.

Words: Polly Glass **Illustration:** Michael Robinson

Buried in the world's record shops, personal collections and web troves, there are Steven Wilson recordings that no one knows are his. Musical curios, mostly electronic, all released under different names without the expectations that come with being a known artist. Who knows what they sound like, or where they are? There is something of that free spirit in his latest solo album *The Harmony Codex*, a 65-minute, electro-organic opus that's maverick in scope and enormous in scale. The most complete, immersive representation of his artistic palate to date.

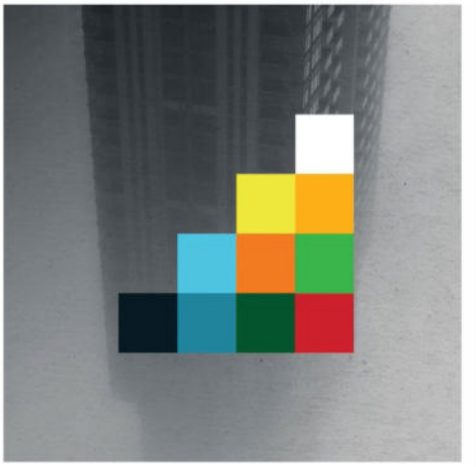
Wilson has never denied his eclectic influences, but there was always a limit on how much he revealed per album. We've had post-punk (*Insurgentes*), pastoral jazzy sounds (*Grace For Drowning*), a love letter to prog (*The Raven That Refused To Sing (And Other Stories)*), a stirring concept (*Hand. Cannot. Erase*), art-pop (*To The Bone*) and electronica (*The Future Bites*). Then 2020 happened, and the parameters were all but erased.

It would be wrong to suggest that *The Harmony Codex* wasn't a product of lockdown. The ghosts of the pandemic are all over its introspection, otherworldly textures and remote, ensemble approach. Stuck at home with thoughts of memory, mortality and the modern age, a contemplative Wilson found himself free to make *exactly* the record he wanted, with collaborators from across the world just an email away.

In one sense, it's kind of all over the place. The credit list is gigantic, and varies from track to track. There are artificial and organic strains, samples and guitar solos. Three songs are about 10 minutes long, while others clock in around four. By turns you'll hear dark, cavernous drum machines (atmospheric opener *Inclination*), cascades of Americana (*What Life Brings)* and dreamy synth and spoken-word layers (e.g. the title track, featuring the voice of Wilson's wife). It's a trip, but it *works*.

The Harmony Codex

VIRGIN/SW RECORDS



> **The most immersive representation of his artistic palate to date.**

As multiple listens affirm, each song flows into the next, sharing some DNA with a surreal short story (also called *The Harmony Codex*) from Wilson's lockdown-written book *Limited Edition Of One*. Earthy and processed ingredients soar into the abyss like a Trent Reznor film soundtrack with an ear for classic rock epics. It was recorded with spatial audio in mind, but don't worry, it's still suitable for mere mortal home systems (we've listened to it at a spatial playback, through a basic Bluetooth speaker and headphones — it sounded great on all three).

None of which is to say that this doesn't feel like a Steven Wilson record. It absolutely does. Labyrinthine stand-out *Impossible Tightrope* marries Roger Waters expanse with the skewed jazz side of *Grace For Drowning*. The creepy, breathy whispers of *Beautiful Scarecrow* channel the serial-killer pallor of *Raider II*. *Actual Brutal Facts* reflects Porcupine Tree's *Fear Of A Blank Planet* — their Bret Easton Ellis-inspired ode to the screwed-up youth of today. Elsewhere Israeli pop star Ninet Tayeb makes a welcome return, bringing the phenomenal storyteller voice that powered past live favourites such as *Pariah* and *Routine*.

Indeed, as much as *The Harmony Codex* peers into its creator's mind, it owes much of its sprawling nature to its contributors. Certain tracks are effectively Wilson solos — including *Economies Of Scale*, the delicate, electronic first single, warmed with acoustic strums — but others feature mini 'supergroups'. Familiar faces in the prog scene, as well as outliers including 90s DJ Jack Dangers on drum machines and experimental composer David Kollar on guitars.

Guy Pratt and Lee Harris feature on bass and guitar respectively (both of Nick Mason's Saucerful Of Secrets by day), and King Crimson drummer Pat Mastelotto pops up too. Bassist Nick Beggs is there, along with fellow Wilson mainstays Adam Holzman (keys/Wurlitzer) and Theo Travis (flute/sax/clarinet). The aforementioned Tayeb sings on various tracks and contributes lyrics to *Rock Bottom* — a powerful Pink Floyd-meets-Bond-theme ballad, which draws from her experience of bipolar disorder. The collaboration continues on the deluxe edition, which includes a reimagined version of the album, with remixes and interpretations by Manic Street Preachers, Interpol, Mikael Åkerfeldt and Tears For Fears' Roland Orzabal.

It's perhaps *The Harmony Codex*'s closer *Staircase* that most embodies this chapter in his career. Over 10 minutes it flies through a kaleidoscope of electronics, guitar, Vangelis-y synths, gnarly bass, horn swells, dark space and, finally, spoken-word. The sound of rain. Vastness and intimacy. A compelling finale to Wilson's existential free-fall through the fears, twists and hopes of the mind, and of life.

EARTHSIDE

Let The Truth Speak MUSIC THEORIES RECORDINGS

US alchemists go big on heavily collaborative second album.

Earthside's ambitious 2015 debut album, *A Dream In Static*, was impressive in its expansive and undeniably cinematic approach to prog metal, stretching what might be expected of the genre in a similar way to the likes of Riverside or Haken. However, as the eight-year gap between it and this follow-up suggests, *Let The Truth Speak* hasn't had a straightforward gestation. A plan to work with guest

> **An album of multiple layers and thought-provoking themes.**

contributors from around the world was ambitious on paper, but teasing out intent, impact and meaning from the guts of every track has resulted in a fairly tortuous journey to reach accord on the album's songs, sound and direction. But on this evidence, the struggle has been worth it.

Although the Moscow Studio Symphony Orchestra, which featured on the debut, are absent, the quest to draw in sounds and textures from far and wide is still evident on instrumental opener *But What If We're Wrong*. Enlisting both the Sandbox Percussion ensemble as well as harpists Duo Scorpio, it builds from an understated tuned percussion ostinato adding layers from the rest of the band, rising and falling in intensity, both hypnotising and tantalising. Elsewhere, *We Who Lament* and the lengthy title cut — with terrific, searing vocals from TesseracT's Daniel Tompkins and haunting, ethereal voice improvisations from Russian artist Gennady Tkachenko-Papizh — serve up the big, sweeping, occasionally dark contemporary metal flavours tempered with reflective synths and strings.

Earthside style themselves as composers first and foremost rather than simply musicians, and almost every track is given a unique edge by virtue of the guests they've chosen to work with. *Tyranny*'s heavy-hitting guitar riffs and ultra-smooth, almost sultry verses frame vocals from Indian metal singer Pritam Adhikary (some in his native Bengali), and *Pattern Of Rebirth* features Fire From The Gods' frontman AJ Channer, who was given free rein to create all the lyrics and vocal melodies, resulting in a collision of alt-metal, gritty electronica influenced pop and rap/spoken word. Some of the more counter-intuitive collaborations bear exhilarating fruit, not least *The Lesser Evil*, where the band work with a serious horn section and sometime Tower Of Power and Temptations singer Larry Bragg to create an unlikely, and superb hybrid of prog metal, West Coast funk and R&B.

Let The Truth Speak is an album of multiple layers. Its rich and diverse music and thought-provoking themes venture way beyond simplistic labels. It can be intense and, in this plethora of musical textures and lyrical ideas, sometimes a little overwhelming but never less than exciting.

GARY MACKENZIE

DEVENDRA BANHART

Flying Wig MEXICAN SUMMER

American/Venezuelan freak-folk musician goes electronic.

Best known for skewed, impish, early Bolan-esque folk rock, Devendra Banhart treads pastures-new on his 11th album. Recorded in a cabin in California's Topanga Canyon once owned by Neil Young, *Flying Wig* dispenses with acoustic guitars, utilising synths, vintage beat-boxes and seismic, heavily processed electric guitars instead. It's an approach that works beautifully on hazy dream pop stand-out *Fireflies*, but these dense, largely downtempo songs just occasionally get stodgy, indistinct.

Banhart's co-producer here is Welsh singer-songwriter and labelmate Cate Le Bon. Together, they sidestep convention on *Twin*, which pitches itself somewhere between David Bowie's *Fashion* and Pink Floyd's *Another Brick in the Wall, Pt 2*. Drawing inspiration from a hope-in-the-face-of-adversity poem by Buddhist priest Kobayashi Issa, Banhart approached *Flying Wig* "battle-scarred by life and loss", and there is an opaque poignancy to the album's intense, ambitious material. And why *Flying Wig*? Because the hairpiece that Banhart was gifted by artist Isabelle Albuquerque took on a disembodied quality when perched on his mic stand. **JMN**

EDGAR BROUGHTON

Break The Dark ESOTERIC

King Edgar keeps the freak flag still flying on late-career solo album.

Break The Dark began life as a collection of sketches that Edgar Broughton had saved on various devices with the intention of completing with drummer brother Steve and long-term Edgar Broughton Band bassist Arthur Grant.

The pandemic and Steve's passing in 2022 derailed and then ultimately galvanised the project. Featuring appearances by Grant, cellist Calle Arngrip and Broughton's son Luke, the result has a stately, glacial feel and a languorous minimalist richness. Broughton's work is deeply ruminative and often profoundly mournful: *The Raven's Song* is a deep and dark jig (*'a plague upon our capital that brings us to our knees'*), while the moving *Flowers In A Bowl* brings Arngrip's cello to the fore. Broughton's voice has developed into a striking whisper, and his guitar is never overplayed – when it does appear, as with the ethereal slide work on *Sound Don't Come*, it is a powerful reminder of his talents.

Mixed by John Leckie (who worked as tape op on EBB's 1969 debut album *Wasa Wasa*), *Break The Dark* is the first time Edgar Broughton has had total control over an album, and it's obvious that he's revelled in the process. **DE**

CHRISTINA

Bar Stool Prophet TIGERMOTH

A (non-alcoholic) toast to the Magenta frontwoman's long-awaited third LP.

"I've been spoiled over the years to have such talent on tap," says Christina Booth in the notes for her third solo album, referencing Magenta bandmates Chris Fry (guitars), Jiffy Griffiths (drums), Dan Nelson (bass), and keyboard player, producer and Tigermoth boss Rob Reed. But they've had some pretty good material to work with too: Booth's vocal is assured, distinctive, soft yet powerful.

The themes are big – political corruption, ageing, bereavement, alcohol addiction – but her range, expression and talent for storytelling (often from a first-hand POV) carry it off, with parallels to her late friend and collaborator David Longdon.

Booth moves convincingly between genres too: the soulful *Mission Bell* and *The Giant Awakes*, the gospel-buoyed *Sail On Sister Genevieve*, the light and jazzy *Age Of The Revolution*, which dips into Portishead's *Glorybox* mid-way. Thanks to Reed's finely attuned ear, the mix is astounding, and the additions of Steve Hackett – on harmonica! – and musical theatre lead/Chimpan A vocalist Steve Balsamo create a sumptuous-sounding, inspirational *Greatest Showman*-esque finale, *Rise Again*. **JK**

D'VIRGILIO, MORSE & JENNINGS

Sophomore INSIDEOUTMUSIC

Modern prog heavyweights waste no time in reuniting.

Just 20 months after their debut, Nick D'Virgilio, Neal Morse and Haken vocalist Ross Jennings return with an album that, unlike its tongue-in-cheek title, is bristling with imagination.

Given all three are assured singers, it's no surprise that *Sophomore* is a vocal-led record that's embellished with minimalist but astutely assembled instrumentation. On the likes of *Hard To Be Easy* the trio's voices blend seamlessly together, morphing into a wall of harmonies and deft acoustic undercurrents. On others, their individual timbres shine. D'Virgilio leads on the cheery, fluttering *I'm Not Afraid*, the proggiest song on offer. Morse is beautifully meditative atop *The Weary One*'s cello-lavished tome, and Jennings is a charm on the purring, morose *Weighs Me Down*.

Despite their individual achievements, *Sophomore* is a collaborative, combined effort from start to finish and it's what makes this partnership so palpable. The theatrical *Mama* and the 60s swing of *Walking On Water* offers more energy and thrust, but it's a record that will be better remembered for its bright vocal shine and easygoing summery shimmers. **POW**

DISTRICT 97

Stay For The Ending SPIRIT OF UNICORN MUSIC

US proggers' invitation to stick around and enjoy their thoughtful partying.

It's long been clear that District 97 collectively possess prodigious talent and, in Leslie Hunt, a singer with authority and a strong identity, even if their off-kilter approaches and wilful eclecticism can be a bit much at times.

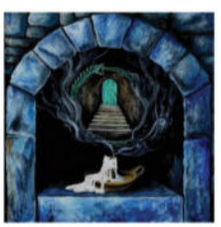
Five albums and a couple of line-up changes in, *Stay For The Ending* might well help to ease some of the doubters off the fence and into their world. From the title-cut opener through to final track *The Watcher*, it's apparent that the band have lost none of their edge or musical chops. Strains of Crimson (especially in *Crossover*) and UK can be detected, alongside more guitar-heavy prog metal elements, and drummer Jonathan Schang even sticks in a drum solo to hard-rocking curio *Deck Is Stacked*. But there's evidence throughout, *Mirror* and 90s-style ballad *X-Faded*, for example, that more time has been spent marrying musical flair with texture, chord progressions and vocals.

While they've retained the unconventional approach with which the made their name, it does feel like District 97 have honed their songcraft without losing any of their quirk or lowering their impressively high standards. **GMM**

THE EMERALD DAWN

In Time WORLD'S END RECORDS

Cornwall-based symphonic proggers' long and winding return.



It's the old sweeten-the-pill trick: lure the listener in with sweet tunefulness and infectious hooks, then take them where you will. This St Ives quartet do just that when they kick off the weighty, 23-minute suite *Out Of Time* that opens their fifth album with the enchanting topline melody that vocalist Tree Stewart serenades us with. It acts as a prelude to some engagingly freewheeling electric piano from Stewart, backed up by wriggling fretless bass and mood-swinging percussion, before guitarist Ally Carter gets to show out on the fretboard. Yet before the halfway point, the instrumental improvisation begins to meander to the point of indulgent padding until the vocal returns for the final passage.

Attention is grabbed again on *Timeless*, not least thanks to Carter's tenor sax and Stewart's flute offering seductive new textures, while Stewart's vocals begin to echo the classically informed melancholia of Dead Can Dance, as they also do when accompanied by the eerie electronica underpinning the no less hefty third and final track *The March Of Time*. Much to like, then, even if some more ruthless editing might have made for a more consistently captivating listen. **JS**

GOAT

Medicine ROCKET RECORDINGS

Mysterious Swedes: now more mysterious than ever.

Somewhere in the distance, as if at the end of a long tunnel, monks are chanting. A bell rings, but it's barely audible. It might not even be there at all. And then a disembodied, echoing voice intones an introduction: '*So, shall we practise a little meditation together?*' To which the only answer is: "Oh, go on, then." Music starts, but it's not like regular, Earthly music. It instead sounds like *Venus In Furs*-era Velvet Underground playing an early Black Sabbath riff, but in the desert. At night. There's some wah-wah, and some more wah-wah, and some flute, and everything teeters on the cusp of collapse. There's a guitar solo that seems to go on for days, and, somewhere, lifting the song high into the WTF-o-sphere, a lone voice howls and soars.

> **Quite frankly, it's bonkers. And it's also rather beautiful.**

As far as introductions to albums go, the beginning of *Impermanence & Death* — the bewildering opening track of Goat's equally mind-bending fifth studio album, *Medicine* — sets the scene perfectly for a collection of songs that venture to the kind of places songs rarely venture. If, indeed, they can be called songs at all. Released less than a year after the wild, genre-defying *Oh Death*, it sees the enigmatic Swedish mavericks taking that album's hazy-edged template (psychedelia, prog, Afrobeat, stoner rock, free jazz, weird folk, krautrock, celtic paganism, eastern mysticism and noodle dance all feed into the mix) and twisting it into more mellifluous shapes, the soundtrack to the burning of a wicker man at the end of the universe. Quite frankly, it's bonkers. And it's also rather beautiful.

Raised By Hills sounds like an outtake from Jethro Tull's *Songs From The Wood*, giving its campfire folk a distinctly spectral twist. *I Became The Unemployment Office* heads further into space, a motorik chug wrapped in reverb, with guitars that slowly unfurl and unwind. *TSOD*, with its rattling sitar and pirouetting flute, is a three-minute song that somehow stretches towards nirvana, and George Harrison would have loved it. *Vakna* is twice as lengthy but feels half as long, with guitars that swell and stretch and never really go anywhere but it clearly doesn't matter. *You'll Be Alright* gently unspools in a sea of distant tablas, distorted guitar and more flute. *Join The Resistance*, originally recorded by fellow Swedes Gås, returns to Tony Iommi territory, with banshee wails bringing ritualistic fervour to an already maniacal mix, before dipping towards doom metal at the death.

It all ends with *Tripping In The Graveyard*, which somehow combines all of the above, climbing another rung on the ladder to divinity, before fading as the monks return and temple bells chime.

FRASER LEWRY

GONG

Unending Ascending KSCOPE

Psych prog legends return with cosmic rock of the highest order.

Now three studio albums in since Daevid Allen sailed off this mortal coil, what's striking about this latest release from Gong is how self-possessed they sound. Headed by the irrepressible Kavus Torabi, they're not just running with the baton Allen handed onto them. Instead, they've forged their own unique identity while remaining true to the original spirit of Gong, making music that's both playful and exploratory, enraptured by the possibilities of the invisible worlds around us.

> **It's enraptured by the possibilities of invisible worlds.**

Thematically, *Unending Ascending* picks up where 2019's *The Universe Also Collapses* left off, inspired by the realm of "subatomic dreams" and the hidden mysteries that reside there. Of course, this could also be read as an analogue for the psychedelic experience itself, where the holy sacrament of LSD reveals reality to be a mere fabrication of our everyday perceptions. And Torabi has talked before about his desire for Gong to create modern yet authentic psychedelia — not only a disorientation of the senses, but a reorientation too.

That's not to say that *Unending Ascending* is just an amorphous stream of swirly pothead trance rock — far from it. In fact, this album feels more focused than its predecessor, while pushing even further out into the cosmos. With its John McGeoch-esque chorused guitar, the gothic tinged psych pop of *Tiny Galaxies* eases the listener in nicely, and even when it crunches up a gear, it exudes a deliciously mellow vibe. *My Guitar Is A Spaceship* is as fun as its title, borne aloft on a great switchback riff before saxophonist Ian East steps forward and takes off on an ecstatic trajectory of his own. It's one of those songs where something new and delightful keeps blossoming throughout.

After blast-off comes *Ship Of Ishtar*, and Fabio Golfetti's beautiful floating glissando. Ishtar was the Babylonian goddess of love and sexuality and the Queen of Heaven, and this is a hymn to shagging on a galactic scale, like a slow-motion orgasm. The ghosts of Torabi's other bands — specifically Knifeworld and Cardiacs — come through on *All Clocks Reset*, spiky Fripp-style riffing meets precise, pointillist horns dancing in formation, while *Choose Your Goddess* gets fiercer still, pumping avant-metal barely kept under restraint, little volleys of drums and sax threatening to break it free. But tranquillity is restored by the album's conclusion, with *Asleep Do We Lay* acting as a final comedown, its lazy chords and cooing angels offering sonic balm for the returning astral traveller.

After 54 years, *Unending Ascending* shows that Gong's mission to explore music's outer reaches is far from over.

JOE BANKS

BRIAN ENO

Top Boy (Score From The Original Series) MUSIC ON VINYL/BEATINK RECORDS

Ambient king's unlikely alliance thrives.

Top Boy, currently embarking on its swansong season, is a gripping TV series following the travails of London drug dealers amid a backdrop of contemporary hip-hop and grime. While the writing and acting ensure there's a lot more to it than that (it's suspenseful and soulful), the first guy in line to score it between the bits where, say, Central Cee, Ghetts or Little Simz are testifying about life on the streets wouldn't necessarily be the esteemed, professorial Brian Eno. Yes, he's provided soundtracks to films about lunar landings, Russian museums and more, but could his work gel with a pressurised drama where words like "wasteman", "patterned" and "allow it" boil in a very different temperature to that exhibited on *Before And After Science* or *Music For Airports*?

Yes, as it turns out. Eno's themes and motifs operate between the pulses and throbs, and wisely make no attempt to compete. His brooding contributions are an important factor in the undercurrent of dread which shades even the most building-block scenes. This cherry-picked selection from five seasons is almost entirely available for the first time, and its atmospheres ace it. **CR**

FISH ON FRIDAY

8mm ESOTERIC

Soft-focused quartet's wistful sixth album.

While it's always impressive to see progressive rock that, well, progresses, there's also something to be said for fine-tuning a signature sound. That seems to be the approach of this Antwerp-centred four-piece, who have borne the influence of Alan Parsons Project, Asia and other AOR-leaning art-rock pioneers on their previous five albums.

And it hits the melodic sweet spot again on the title track of *8mm*, which creates a wonderfully nostalgic feel enhanced by the sound of the titular camera reel whirring in the background. If 2020's *Black Rain* had a sense of foreboding running through it, *8mm* sounds more optimistic. In fact there's a real sense of post-lockdown appreciation of life in *Jump This Wall*, not least when they rhyme the title with *'I'm having a ball...'*

The only drawback is that these sweet musings start to cloy after a while when the harmony-swathed soft rock stylings, easy listening touches and Frank Van Bogaert's beatific vocals begin to blend into the background without the counterpoint of Lula Beggs, daughter of FOF bassist Nick Beggs, who lent her vocals to the last album but doesn't feature here. **JS**

GREEN LUNG

This Heathen Land NUCLEAR BLAST

Occult psych rockers conjure a pagan party.

'You are about to embark on a journey into occult Albion. Come, it's time to explore this heathen land,' commands the voice that begins Londoners Green Lung's third album in an opening worthy of *The Twilight Zone*. What follows is a further exploration of the dark, forgotten places and pagan histories they dived into on 2019's *Woodland Rites* and 2021's *Black Harvest*.

It's intoxicating stuff, powered by a blend of John Wright's rumbling organ, Scott Black's wicked riffs and grooves deep enough to drown in from the rhythm section of Joseph Ghast and Matt Wiseman. Leading the ceremony, Tom Templar has the pipes and the charisma to keep the congregation mesmerised.

They can channel the churning heaviness of doom in *One For Sorrow*, switch to an acoustic folk vibe in *Song Of The Stones*, or capture the sheer exuberance of very early Queen in the harmonies of *Hunters In The Sky*. The album draws on vintage occult rock and psychedelia, but the sound is as fresh as a daisy in an abandoned graveyard. Green Lung prove that Sweden doesn't have the monopoly on the best retro revivalist bands. **DW**

HAWKLORDS

Space HAWKLORDS

Still in search of Space – and it seems they've found it!

Space has perennially fascinated musicians, from Holst's *The Planets* to Sun Ra's claim that he hailed from Saturn, to Hawkwind and the Hawklords. Originally led by Robert Calvert and Dave Brock, they were a short-lived late-70s Hawkwind spin-off and the current line-up's claim to the Hawk name comes from guitarist and vocalist Jerry Richards, who was both in Hawkwind and a 2000s iteration of Hawklords, and bass guitarist and vocalist Mr Dibs, another Hawkwind veteran, while Dave Pearce also drums with The Bevis Frond. Space is certainly the place here with every song evoking its vastness and mystery. With this engaging and energised collection, Hawklords refer to a familiar space rock lexicon of monster riffs, electronic jet streams and lyrics exploring the silence of space, life on Mars and gravity wells.

As the Devil has the best tunes so Space has the best riffs, with *You Will Be The Sun* a particularly pulverising example of flat-out stoner rock, *Super Star Drive* comes across like a cosmic glam stomper and respite comes at the close with *Starlight*, an evocative melodic outing featuring Richards' acoustic slide guitar. **MB**

HEAD WITH WINGS

Without Intervention HEADWITHWINGS.BANDCAMP.COM

More ornate and expressive gems from the accomplished art-rockers.

For roughly a decade, Head With Wings have been defying stylistic restrictions with their exploratory and heartfelt musings. Aided once again by the production of Redemption/Silent Skies' Vikram Shankar, the group double down on those strengths on *Without Intervention*.

It kicks off with *The Dream Broker*, a multifaceted track whose forceful musicianship, defiant vocals and symphonic yet subtle nuances are simultaneously accessible and avant-garde. Elsewhere, *Galaxy*, *Comfort In Illusion* and *Absolute Zero* uphold that adventurous magic.

A couple of minute-long electric guitar interludes in the shape of *Remnant* and *26 Bell Chimes* add a cinematic dimension to the sequence, with the former's moody coatings and the latter's ceremonial rings giving each plenty of personality.

Dreamlike ballads *Task Of Breathing* and *Three Months* shake things up further, solidifying the album as their most succinctly confident and representative statement. However underappreciated Head With Wings have been thus far, *Without Intervention* deserves to catapult them into the limelight. Don't pass it by. **JMB**

HEKZ

Terra Nova BMH AUDIO

AOR, prog, djent: it's all here and more.

It's all change for HeKz as frontman Matt Young assembles a fresh line-up for the band's fourth album. *Terra Nova* sees Young joined by guitarist Mark Bogert, Irina Markevich on violin and drummer Moyano el Buffalo, with a guest appearance by keyboard wizard Adam Holzman. Young's influences aren't hard to fathom, but they are sufficiently diverse to lend *Terra Nova* musical breadth, combining the classic and the modern.

Sabotage suggests the pomp and grandeur of Kansas, and *Mayday* taps into the prog metal riffage of Dream Theater. The vocal harmonies and Young's belting delivery hail from the era before growling replaced singing in rock music, but the production is glossy and distinctly contemporary. While *So Far Gone* is an unabashed power ballad, HeKz prove that they're not stuck in the 70s and 80s with the drop-tuned, djent heaviness of *I Am The Thrall*.

The band love to accelerate into a galloping midsection for a burst of energy and *The Silent Man* is an album highlight, giving all the players room to flex with visceral, expansive soloing. Despite the shifting line-up, *Terra Nova* is HeKz's strongest work yet. **DW**

MYRKUR

Spine RELAPSE RECORDS

Birth, death, and all points between from the Danish changeling.

From the black metal of 2017's *Mareridt* to the progressive folk of 2020's *Folkesange*, Amalie Bruun — aka Myrkur — has been a musical shapeshifter, an artist for whom genre conventions are the starting point for her creative journeys, never the destination. With *Spine* she forms a union between the very different styles of her past work, producing an album that can drift and glide over the listener, or lurch out of the shadows screaming evil. Sometimes even within the same song.

> **Blends insoluble elements to birth this strange chimera.**

All this could have made for a disconcerting experience, but Myrkur's ethereal vocal presence binds it all together. The album reunites her with Randall Dunn, the producer from *Mareridt*, although it never becomes as ferociously malevolent or grindingly acerbic as that record. *Spine* was recorded in Iceland's Sundlaugin studio, which has played host to the likes of Sólstafir, Alcest and Sigur Rós, and there's a post-rock/post-metal sensibility that can bubble up to the surface in the focus on exploring dynamics and building up layers of sound. *Like Humans* puts that approach into practice, staying on a theme while the rhythm moves from a thumping heartbeat and big crashes to a frantic black-metal blast beat.

The mood tends towards the melancholic, capturing the fullness of the human experience, from death in *Balfaerd* (rough translation: 'Viking Funeral'), with its haunting strings and disembodied voices full of longing, to motherhood in the lullaby *Menneskebarn* ('Human Child'). The latter is laced with darkness; it could be a lament as easily as a lullaby. *Mothlike* marks an unexpected diversion into a dance beat and twinkling synths that sound like a gloomy 80s goth club track, albeit one punctuated by detours into black metal outbursts. What's very different about the overall sound here versus *Mareridt* is how the drums and distorted guitars play a supporting role, rather than being front and centre in the mix. It's the mournful strings and that siren call of a voice that hold the spotlight, weaving a musical web to transfix the listener.

The title track is a study in contrasts, like Loreena McKennitt fronting a metal band, and *Blazing Sky* is a rousing anthem sure to be a highlight of a live set. *Valkyriernes Sang*, or 'Song Of The Valkyries', ties Myrkur to the broader Scandinavian scene, even if her style is too defiantly esoteric to comfortably be contained by the 'Viking' tag. There's no one else who sounds quite like this, at once abrasive and soothing, blending seemingly insoluble elements to birth this strange chimera. Distinctly original and morbidly compelling.

DAVID WEST

NEW RELEASES

PETER HAMILL
'IN A FOREIGN TOWN/ OUT OF WATER 2023'
(32CD EDITION)

- This 2CD set features new reworkings of two of Peter's landmark albums originally released in 1988 and 1990 respectively. The uncertainty surrounding the rights of both these original albums prompted Hammill to revisit both works in the studio, reworking and re-recording whilst also using elements of the original material to stunning effect. The finished results are remarkable and demonstrate the strength of the original compositions. No longer destined to be viewed as "a product of their time", these new 2023 reworkings of 'In a Foreign Town' and 'Out of Water' can be seen as vital recordings in Peter Hammill's extensive body of work. Release Date 24th November 2023

EANTCD21102

NEKTAR
'REMEMBER THE FUTURE'
(4CD/BLU-RAY BOX SET)

- This 50th Anniversary edition comprises 4 CDs and a multi-region Blu Ray disc and features a newly remastered original stereo mix of the album along with and additional two CDs featuring a previously unreleased concert recorded at the Stadthalle, Munster, Germany in January 1974 and stunning new 5.1 Surround Sound and Stereo mixes of the album from the original multi track tapes.
- Also included on the Blu ray disc are the original 1973 Quad mix and additional video content comprising of the rare 'Remember the Future' promotional film, the film of 'Wings' shown on BBC TVs Old Grey Whistle Test and a live performance of 'Desolation Valley / Waves' for the same TV show. Release Date 24th November 2023

ECLEC52846

EDGAR BROUGHTON
'BREAK THE DARK'
(CD EDITION)

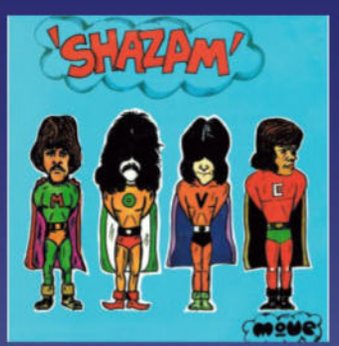
- This stunning record began life during the enforced COVID lockdown and evolved into a project that is truly special.
- The album features appearances by Edgar Broughton Band member Arthur Grant and cellist Calle Arngrip and has been mixed by the acclaimed producer and engineer John Leckie (who began his career as a Tape Operator on the first Edgar Broughton Band album 'Wasa Wasa'). 'Break The Dark' sees Edgar Broughton evolve his songwriting craft into something quite remarkable. It is a record which ranks as one of his most accomplished works. Release Date 27th October 2023

EANTCD1101

FISH ON FRIDAY
'8MM'
(CD EDITION)

- This is the band's sixth album and much anticipated follow up to the critically acclaimed 'Black Rain', features a line-up of Nick Beggs (bass and vocals), Frank van Bogaert (keyboards & vocals), Marty Townsend (guitars) and Marcus Weymaere (drums) and is the culmination of three years work. The sessions saw Nick Beggs assume the role of co-producer with Frank Van Bogaert.
- '8mm' is a fascinating collaboration between friends and kindred musical spirits and is their finest work to date. Release Date 27th October 2023

EANTCD1100



THE MOVE
'SHAZAM!'
(REMASTERED VINYL EDITION)

- Of all of the groups to emerge in Britain in the latter half of the 1960s, The Move was arguably one of the finest. A powerful act on stage, the group were blessed with one of the most imaginative songwriters of his generation in Roy Wood. 'Shazam' is regarded by many as the finest Move album, despite being recorded in a time of flux for the band. It is rightly regarded as a true classic of the era.
- This new vinyl LP edition of 'Shazam' has been cut at Abbey Road Studios and fully restores the original LP artwork.
- Release Date 24th November 2023

ECLECLP2538

ARTHUR BROWN
'DANCE'
(EXPANDED AND REMASTERED CD EDITION)

- Unavailable for some years, this new Esoteric Recordings' edition has been newly remastered and expanded to include six previously unreleased bonus tracks, recorded by Arthur Brown and his band for the BBC radio In Concert series in April 1975.
- The release also features an illustrated booklet with new notes. Release Date 27th October 2023

ECLEC2847

HAWKWIND
'SPACE RITUAL 50TH ANNIVERSARY'

2 CD REMIXED EDITION

- This 50th anniversary 2 CD set features a stunning new mix of the album by Stephen W Tayler, from the original 16-track master tapes.
- The set includes the complete unedited versions of Brainstorm and Time We Left This World Today and the encore of You Shouldn't Do That. With a illustrated booklet with new essay this new release is the ultimate tribute to this legendary album.

ATOMCD21054 - CD

10 CD/1 BLU-RAY LIMITED EDITION 11 DISC BOX SET

- This 50th anniversary limited edition deluxe boxed set comprises 10 CDs and a Blu ray disc and features a new remaster of the original album, along with new mixes of all three complete concerts recorded on the tour at Liverpool Stadium, Sunderland Locarno and Brixton Sundown, all mixed by Stephen W Tayler.
- The set also includes a stunning 5.1 Surround Sound mix of the album, along with a new stereo mix of the album, including the complete unedited versions of Brainstorm and Time We Left This World Today and the encore of You Shouldn't Do That.
- The set is completed with a 68 page illustrated book with new essay and a reproduction of the rare Space Ritual poster format tour programme, making this boxed set the definitive release and this legendary album.

ATOMCD111053 - 11 DISC SET

DOUBLE TRANSPARENT GATEFOLD VINYL EDITION

- This 50th anniversary 2 LP limited edition has been cut at Abbey Road studios utilising the original master tapes.

QATOMLP21052 - VINYL

INFINITE RISING

Awakening INFINITERISING.BANDCAMP.COM

Space rock meets instrumental virtuosity.

An instrumental power trio playing extended range instruments – eight-string guitar and six-string bass – it's tempting to compare Infinite Rising to Animals As Leaders. However, these Italians bring their own personality to progressive metal, with a style they describe as 'spatial prog'. Sci-fi themes permeate *Awakening*, reflected in the song titles and the feeling of exploring the vastness of space. There's constant dialogue between Federico Albanese's guitar and Silvia Pistolesi's bass, passing melodic ideas back and forth, and taking turns to establish musical themes. Pistolesi can harmonise with the guitar or lock in with drummer Alessandro Formichi to highlight a groove. *Nocturnal Skywatchers* begins in a drifting, relaxed mood, like watching the stars come out at dusk before Albanese introduces a menacing theme that evokes the fear of what might be looking back from the great unknown. The trio embrace heaviness with the djent-leaning *Eternal* and *Orbital Inclination*, yet they never sacrifice songcraft for shred's sake and Formichi's drums possess an appealing warmth. A stimulating debut full of widescreen musical imagery. **DW**

JORDSJØ

Salighet KARISMA

Ingenious retro-prog from the frozen north.

This prolific Norwegian duo have been making fine vintage-style prog for nearly a decade now. Having cleared the decks with last year's *Nattfiolen Suite* (an epic outtake from 2019's *Nattfiolen* album) and *Jord Sessions* (rejigged material from their self-titled), they can now get back to the vivid, sepia-steeped adventures that made 2021's *Pastoralia* such a joy.

Salighet is Jordsjø's fifth full-length, and it's their most fully realised flight of fancy yet. Their sound is still an amalgam of classic 70s prog, Norwegian jazz and lysergic folk, but there's a sense of momentum to songs like the shape-shifting *Sankeren* that makes this a more immediate record than its predecessors. It flows beautifully from start to finish, but saves its most sumptuous indulgences for the closing *Sjernestigen*: a charismatic epic that begins with some gently askance chamber music, before building towards a grand crescendo of old-school pomp, with Moog solos, rippling Mellotron and a final descent into piano-led pathos.

Like each of their releases to date, *Salighet* is nostalgic without being derivative, and so full of eccentric ideas that it deserves an audience beyond Jordsjø's sizeable cult following. **DL**

KING GIZZARD AND THE LIZARD WIZARD

The Silver Cord KGLW

Glow sticks out for the prolific Aussie group's 25th release.

Is there no stopping King Gizzard And The Lizard Wizard? Apparently not as the Melbourne group dive headlong into album number 25, and, having explored garage rock, psychedelic pop, prog and metal in their 13-year existence, it's time for them to go all-machine space-disco-rave with *The Silver Cord*.

They might be ridiculously prolific, but the quality of what they do remains extremely high, even when they're admittedly out of their comfort zone of guitar-based rock. *The Silver Cord* showcases their love of Giorgio Moroder, Jean-Michel Jarre and modern electronic dance music, with some new age, mystical touches on *Theia* and *Gilgamesh*. Don't let this last reference be a turn-off; if late-period Tangerine Dream prompts a little bopping, *The Silver Cord* will too. Other touchstones are KLF, *Screamadelica*-era Primal Scream and Pop Will Eat Itself's infectious grungy grooves occasionally cut with some rapid-fire rap, as on *Set*.

It's fun, spontaneous, melodic, dopamine-high stuff, so dig out the glow sticks and the tie-dye hoodie, get along to a party in the woods and don't fight it, feel it. **JK**

PROGRESSIVE METAL

Dom Lawson buckles up for a delve into the darker, heavier side.

The ability to read backwards will come in handy while listening to the debut album by **Vrajitor's Tenebrarium**. An unpredictable scamper through esoteric prog rock, avant-garde ambience and all things horror-related, *Esrevinu Eht Fo Naicigam Eht, Lived Eht Ot Detoved* (Avantgarde Music) owes plenty to cinematic forebears like Goblin, Jacula and Fabrio Frizzi, but the inventive, cartoon-creepy likes of *Rubedo* and *Exorcismus* can more than hold their own against the classics.

After nearly 20 years of experimental heaviness, **Vanishing Kids** have made their masterpiece. *Miracle Of Death* (Aural Music) is the missing link between shoegaze and organic 70s hard rock. From the rootsy, proto metal of *Spill The Dark* and *Only You*'s bullish dream pop, to the anthemic arena-psych of *Midnight Child* and *Feral Angel*'s glacial goth rock, it's utterly bewitching from start to finish, and singer Nikki Drohomyreky will invade your dreams for the foreseeable.

Sunbeam Overdrive do a brilliant job of evading cliché on debut *Diama* (Tentacles Industries). Strong on intricate melodies and even stronger on ingenious, post-djent riffing, the Frenchmen have struck upon an original hybrid: one that prizes songwriting over tech-proficient showboating. *Diamond Shape* and the title track demonstrate the band's unique approach, while the closing *Hard Sun* is a phones-in-the-air show-stopper with a grungy backstory.

Another band with an eclectic take on modern prog metal, **Apotheus** could be Portugal's answer to Evergrey, albeit with fewer crushing riffs and a more varied melodic palette. *Ergo Atlas* (Black Lion) is a wildly dynamic affair, with ornate heaviness and dramatic heft in equal amounts. The syncopated squall of *Ergo Bellum* and disarming dream ballad *Alphae's Sons* are the obvious standouts, but the whole record exudes class.

Only the irredeemably dead inside could resist the phrase "prog metal space opera". The third in a planned nine-album conceptual extravaganza, **Docker's Guild**'s *The Mystic Technocracy — Season 2: The Age of Entropy* is as convoluted as its title suggests. Douglas R Docker has assembled an all-notable line-up of musicians and singers — including Anneke van Giersbergen and Amanda Somerville — to bring his vision to life. Following the story — "a silicon-based techno-organic alien race attempts to wipe out all life on Earth through organised religion" — is tricky, but even if there's a more unapologetically overblown prog album released in 2023, it probably won't have a song called *Pornocracy (Saeculum Obscurum)* on it.

OZRIC TENTACLES

Lotus Unfolding KSCOPE

Good vibrations from Ed Wynne's ageless psych warriors.

Outwardly, Ozric Tentacles have never seemed particularly well equipped for the long haul. Forged in the smoky haze of guitarist and leader Ed Wynne's fervent imagination, the band's sound was almost militantly unfashionable from the start. Their later brush with mainstream recognition in the early 90s, when the psychedelic free festival movement collided with the rise of electronic dance music, seemed to happen more by luck than judgement. And yet, they're still making music that defies time, trend and logic, 38 years after the release of their first, cassette-only album *Erpsongs*.

> **Wynne hits a new wave of inspiration for his lifelong project.**

There have been a few dips in Wynne's creative output over the decades, but Ozric Tentacles have been on particularly great form in recent years. Both the opulent splurge of 2015's *Technicians Of The Sacred* and 2020's eclectic *Space For The Earth* convinced in a way that the band's records had generally not done since the glory days of *Pungent Effulgent* and *Strangeitude*. With son Silas fully assimilated into the creative process, Wynne has plainly hit a new wave of inspiration and enthusiasm for his near-lifelong project. *Lotus Unfolding* confirms it, particularly through its finessed upgrading of many cherished Ozric tropes.

Perhaps in response to the ongoing state of things, *Lotus Unfolding* is a predominantly serene and soothing affair: a kaleidoscopic rush of instrumental escapism with nothing but good intentions. As much as Wynne has a penchant for fleet-footed psychedelic rock with one eye on the dancefloor, his most persistent trait is his ability to conjure tranquillity from seemingly disparate and highly strung ingredients. *Storm In A Teacup* encapsulates his genius across 10 meandering minutes. The liquid bass runs, courtesy of daughter Brandi Wynne, impossibly nimble drumming and skittering electronics are all present and correct, but sounding more bright-eyed and euphoric than ever before. Similarly, *Deep Blue Shade* starts at a familiar, future-funk clip, with Wynne's sparse guitar set against waves of chattering synths, acid house flashbacks and esoteric percussion.

The epic *Crumplepenny* is the best of the lot. A fidgeting, spaced-out sprawl with several psych metal freak-outs from Wynne, it veers off at a wonky angle midway through, dissolves to a twinkly-eyed, reverb-drenched shuffle and spirals away into sweet oblivion. The fusion-tinged scampering of *Green Incantation* and wildly evocative closer *Burundi Spaceport* complete the (magic eye) picture.

The more things change, the more Ozric Tentacles are providing a highly skilled and necessary service.

DOM LAWSON

LALU

The Fish Who Wanted To Be King FRONTIERS

French keyboardist gets colourful on collaborative fourth LP.

Vivien Lalu, the driving force behind the project that bears his surname, has assembled a strong line-up on his fourth album. The result is greater than the sum of its parts.

Lalu gives plenty of freedom of expression to each contributor, allowing them to shine among the glittering whole. Ex-Threshold vocalist Damian Wilson impresses throughout, particularly on the ever-shifting textures of *The Wondering Kind*. Guitarist/bassist Joop Walters' playing brings a touch of class, with the title track's satin-quilted solo a highlight. Lalu's parents both played in 70s French prog act Polène and his love for such music is clear, as he balances progressive pomposity with memorable musicality. *Forever Digital* melds decades together, with a 70s-inspired keys-driven stomp meeting Wilson's 80s arena-rock vocals. *Is That A London Number* dazzles with a silliness that belies the talents that have put it together, but the 14-minute *Amnesia 1916* sees bursts of brilliance interspersed between bloated, impotent passages. It's proof that the band are more effective with their shorter-form writing and those tracks boast the most staying power. **POW**

MANZANERA MACKAY

AM.PM BFD

Jazzy ambient improv from Roxy Music instrumentalists.

In the 70s, Roxy Music were all about grabbing attention. With opening tracks like *Remake/Remodel*, *Do The Strand* and *Street Life*, perhaps only their labelmates King Crimson could claim to enter the room more exuberantly. *Blue Skies*, the song which opens the latest album from Roxy duo Phil Manzanera and Andy Mackay, is the antithesis of exuberance, with a deep bass groove, smatterings of light percussion and meandering horn giving the opener its only real direction.

The pair's musical relationship stretches back more than half a century, though *AM.PM* finds them at their most spontaneous. A hazy aesthetic permeates an album that was conceived and largely executed during the pandemic. These improvisational pieces thrive on the liberty that being locked up allows, with the time signature and key the only framework to get lost in. The results, veer between electronic ambient jazz and moments that could reasonably be described as avant-garde, with classy interjections from violinist Anna Phoebe and rising jazz star Yazz Ahmed on flugelhorn adding to the often exquisite sonic soup. **JA**

MOLYBARON

Something Ominous INSIDEOUTMUSIC

Alt-proggers keep it accessible without blunting their edges.

With their third album, French/Irish four-piece Molybaron continue to straddle the line between alt-rock anthemics and prog tinted experimentation. While not every track delivers everything a prog fan looks for in music, there is plenty for teeth to be sunk into.

What each song does offer, without fail, is oodles of energy and a 'play it simple, stupid' approach to vocal hooks. On the bass-driven, danceable *Dead On Arrival*, the track's title is uttered 14 times in just over three minutes as the quartet try – successfully – to get into their listener's heads. Yet there are enough dynamic shifts, subtle string undercurrents and spinning riffs to keep things interesting.

It's an approach that works in more subtle instances too, like the raucous but earworm-laced title track, which potently opens proceedings. *Breakdown* ramps up the orchestrations to elevate a streamlined, driving-yet-vulnerable song about mental weakness and *Pendulum* sees sharp metal guitars trade off with gloominess. *Something Ominous* isn't a prog rock masterpiece, but it's a solid representation of what this band, built for an audience wider than prog alone, are capable of. **POW**

MOEBIUS

Aspirin CURIOUS MUSIC

Great lost album from komische legend.

Dieter Moebius was best known for his work with Hans-Joachim Roedelius in Cluster and Harmonia, their surnames complementing each other like butter compliments bread. The 88-year-old Roedelius continues to perform with American composer Tim Story, and he's reputed to be in possession of thousands of kilometres of magnetic tape yet to be digitised, meaning there's likely plenty more from him. Moebius, on the other hand, died in 2015 and was less prolific than his musical companion, though Story is also involved in preserving his legacy. Following 2021's posthumous *Moebius Strips*, which featured collaborations with Michael Rother, Jean-Benoit Dunckel and Yuri Suzuki, comes *Aspirin*, an album of outtakes dating back to 2006's *Nurton*. The way each recording sits together so cohesively with the next feels almost like a miracle. The title track grinds and whirs, a hypnotic machine that begins to swing as it discovers funky sentience. *C9H804*'s playful experiments with industrial sources are childlike and dangerous at the same time.

Putting *Aspirin* together must have caused headaches, but we're glad Story went to the trouble. **JA**

PATTERN-SEEKING ANIMALS

Spooky Action At A Distance INSIDEOUTMUSIC

US proggers take a slightly different path with smoothly crafted collection.

Pattern-Seeking Animals' third album, 2022's *Only Passing Through*, banished any lingering impression of them as merely a Spock's Beard side-project, the band from which their four original members are also associated with. This goes further, making deliberate changes to their sound.

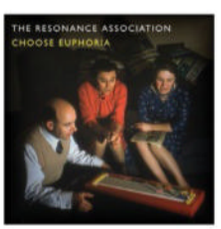
With a different producer, a different studio and a different approach to songwriting and arranging, PSA have delivered an album that sounds like a true progression. There are still familiar points of reference: sections of the 12-minute *He Once Was* evoke both Pink Floyd and post-*Lamb* Genesis, while *Somewhere North Of Nowhere* throws up fleeting shades of Yes. But it also sees them dialling back the full-on rock elements and adding hooks galore, most notably on *Bulletproof*'s fantastic chorus. There are also deeper keyboard textures as well as ska, R&B and world music influences creeping in (albeit frequently in odd time changes).

Progress and risk-taking isn't always about being more musically verbose; sometimes it's about finding comfort in a musical skin, while being open to new influences and shifting sensibilities. Which is precisely what Pattern-Seeking Animals have done here. **GMM**

THE RESONANCE ASSOCIATION

Choose Euphoria TRAHQ.CO.UK

London duo continue their trend of heady and hypnotic electronic prog.



The eighth album from experimental duo Daniel Vincent and Dominic Hemy is one for hypnotism enthusiasts rather than thrill seekers. The pair's dark ambience is meant as an antidote to commercial songwriting and what they offer instead is both cyclical and kaleidoscopic.

Seven-minute opener *Force Majeure* orbits around a simple motif, sucking the listener into its psychedelic realms without ever really doing much. It's a trend that the understated 8-bit synths of *Invocation* and the stuttering beats of the dizzying *Trip Hazard* are all too happy to continue. In fact, the 11-minute closer *Space Time Politics* provides the record's only real drama. It comes in the form of heightened dynamics and a frenzied change in mood, with acid trip, horror film freak-outs playing off fuzzing stoner rock guitars and spacey jazz side-steps.

Otherwise, *Choose Euphoria* offers tranquil escapism. Its music is fluid, be it the delicate patter of *Elsewhere* or the dream-like grooves of *Some Kind*, the songs feel natural, evolving candidly. Their free-flowing nature melds with wealth of subtle details buried within, which help warrant repeat listens. **POW**

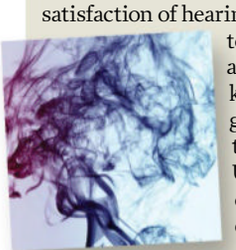
JAZZ PROG

Sid Smith rounds up the best releases from prog's jazzier reaches.

Yumi Hara's *Groove Study* (Bonobo's Ark Records) distills so many of the musical ideas that she's pursued in her work as a composer and performer over the years (she has collaborated with luminaries such as Gong's Daevid Allen, Soft Machine's Hugh Hopper and various members of Henry Cow). It fizzes with invention and inspiration: *Orlyonok* is driven by back-breaking time changes and a serpentine melody. Embraced by Hara's voluminous church organ, which dominates much of the album, it's nothing short of majestic. Henry Cow's Tim Hodgkinson and Chris Cutler bring their precision A-game to Hara's incisive compositions.

Given the presence of touch guitarist Trey Gunn and drummer Pat Mastelotto, **Tu-Ner**'s *T1 - Contact Information* (7d Media) unsurprisingly references the febrile energies of King Crimson's fraKctal adventures in the 90s. Joined by adventurous touch guitarist Markus Reuter, they thrash out dense rhythmic clusters, head-butting riffs and nightmarish soundscapes. Their unflinchingly brutal and creatively raw outpourings make for an immersive but bumpy and challenging flight into the unknown. Gunn and Mastelotto were criminally underrated during their tenure in Crimson, where they agitated for much of that musical institution's experimental high points, so it's especially gratifying hearing them raising merry hell together on this double CD.

Akku Quintet's *Kinema* (Morpheus Records) is the fifth studio album from this Swiss-based ensemble led by Sonar drummer Manuel Pasquinelli. Effortlessly marshalling contrary rhythmical motifs into a cohesive, driven narrative, the satisfaction of hearing all the pieces fit together is not unlike solving a particularly difficult puzzle. With keyboards shot through a distorted gauze, guitar, and sax weave pliable lines around the foundational bass and drums. Undoubtedly mesmeric, wave after wave of building tension and cathartic release delivers a profound and exciting album.



Cut The Sky's *Esz Kodesz* (Aion Records) brings American-born guitarist Alex Roth together with clarinetist Wacław Zimpel and percussionist Hubert Zemler. A seamless mix of post-rock introspection, glacial sweeps of textured guitar mingles with inquisitive drum patterns and yearning woodwind coalesce to form intensely atmospheric but surprising emotional pieces.

Tania Gianouli's *Solo* (Rattle), finds the Greek pianist exploring her instrument's range through sweeping, stately compositions. Whether coaxing multi-layered orchestral overtones, rumbling cadenza or stark, lonely reveries, her playing contains impressionistic depths and deep, romantic lyricism. Pianist **Omri Mor** and bassist **Yosef Gutman Levitt**'s *Melodies Of Light* (Soul Song Records) refit their spontaneous improvisations into fully developed compositions. With additional drums, percussion, and cello, they craft music of exceptional grace.

BRUCE SOORD

Luminescence KSCOPE

Third solo outing from The Pineapple Thief linchpin.

There are albums that seem untimely, out of season. This ain't one of them. Deeply poignant, and suffused in autumnal melancholy, *Luminescence* is a darkly beautiful record, which chimes with the approach of shorter days in troubling times. Bruce Soord has said that it was "inspired by the idea of finding inner peace", and it explores the difficulties of living in a modern metropolis. He doesn't sound as though he has found equanimity, but during 12 poised songs which maintain a singular, pronounced atmosphere, his ongoing search proves hugely absorbing.

> **A fine, immersive record of rare gravitas.**

Musically, *Luminescence* isn't dissimilar in mood or instrumentation to Soord's last solo LP, 2019's *All This Will Be Yours*. This time there's much more intensity and intent, though; a more meditative stoicism. Beginning with a bare acoustic guitar motif, which dissolves on a slow-dying reverb tail, opener *Dear Life* is a gentle grower on which Soord takes the perspective of an elderly, dying parent talking to their child. Elsewhere, *Olomouc*, seemingly taking its title from the Czech city, is deeply contemplative, even bruised. *'How could I prepare for life's assault on me?'* The Pineapple Thief bandleader sings, his voice full of questioning.

If *Lie Flat* makes excellent use of a subtle electronic pulse and dulcimer/zither-like sounds, the elegiac string arrangements that were tracked at the 11th hour at London's RAK Studios bring extra emotional heft. Engineered and conducted by The Divine Comedy's Andrew Skeet, these strings aren't just fairy dust; rather they are key, classy components on songs like *Day Of All Days*, which packs a gorgeous, sepia-tinted chorus that's broadly reminiscent of China Crisis's *Wishful Thinking*.

Field recordings made in a number of different cities while on tour are another element of *Luminescence*, hence we hear ambient traffic noise on stressed commuter instrumental *Rushing*, and a non-British police car siren at the start of *Nestle In*. Elsewhere, *Stranded Here*, possibly about a break-up, reminds us that these songs are inextricably linked, different components of a complex, many-sided malaise. The most perfectly-formed song here, though, is the aptly named *So Simple*, a two-minute interlude on which Soord sings, *'We cling to this dear life.'*

Playing all instruments (strings aside) himself as he so often has, Soord has made a fine, immersive record of rare gravitas. Its stretch for the profoundly universal is Floydian in nature, and it comes with a whole album of bonus material titled *Our Ship Sails At Dusk*. *Luminescence* is the main course, however; a wonderful listen if the stock of Prozac holds out.

JAMES MCNAIR

RETREAT FROM MOSCOW

Dreams, Myths And Machines GRAVITY DREAM MUSIC

Welsh neo-proggers' rebirth continues.

The world doesn't seem in urgent need of any more moderately successful acts from yesteryear reforming to address 'unfinished business', with the emphasis on the latter word. But when Retreat From Moscow reconnected in 2019, after 38 years apart, there wasn't any obvious financial incentive beyond a desire to play together again.

Last year's debut (!) album *The World As We Knew It* backed up that perception and this vibrant follow-up further reinforces it. Its nine tracks are bold, immediate and melodic, with opener *Saving California* tapping into the prehistory of the US West Coast, and diverse topics touched upon elsewhere include homelessness (*Windchill*), Welsh mythology (*Flowerbride*) and that old prog perennial, visions of a dystopian future (*The Machine Stops*).

Whether or not the words prick up ears, the music continually entices: the sky-tickling guitar on *Running Man*, the undulating piano melancholia of *I Can Hear You Calling*, and the dovetailing synth and guitar soloing on *DNA*. Retreat From Moscow are clearly making up for lost time. Their second life is maturing nicely. **JS**

STEIN ROGER SORDAL

As I Try To Remember... APOLLON

Norse prog metaller turns down the volume.

Best known as bassist with Norwegian prog metal veterans Green Carnation, Stein Roger Sordal is a sensitive soul at heart. His first solo album, *As I Try To Remember...* eschews the ornate bombast of his day job in favour of stripped down, acoustic balladry. Pitched somewhere between the sleepy beauty of Fleet Foxes and the delicate aesthetic of Nick Drake, these songs are tender glimmers of melancholy and hope, with Sordal's quietly soulful voice leading the way. The opening *Who Could Tell* sees sparse strumming providing a minimalist backdrop for the singer's gentle pleas.

There are hints of hazy alt-folk in the dreamy drift of *Ride On*, and *187* veers into Americana territory, albeit with a windchill factor that is uniquely Norwegian.

It reaches a peak on its final two songs. *Lucifer* is a lovelorn gem, with sweet vocal harmonies and twangy guitar punctuation, while *Without A View* is the album's big prog moment: an eight-minute psychedelic indulgence, as sorrowful as it is pretty. But as downbeat as these songs are, they combine here to soothing and immersive effect. *'Set sail for the unknown,'* sings Sordal, knowing that the journey will at least be calm. **DL**

SOURCE

Emergence LISTENTOSOURCE.COM

Colorado trio reflect on hope and despair with fourth album.

There's plenty to like in Source's new album, *Emergence*: the gritty riffs, the soothing vocals, the knotted rhythms. It's their fourth record, but they'll still find it tricky to shake the comparisons to prog luminaries Tool and Opeth. Shades of the former snake their way in through the floating guitar riffs, while for the latter, vocalist Benjamin Gleason sounds like Mikael Åkerfeldt – but that's no bad thing. Dig deeper and this is a band who have just about enough to stand out on their own; *Vesica (The Path In)* benefits from some stinging bass from the hands of Pascal Faurie, while the middle salvo of *A Path Out* is a prog metal trip. The group, meanwhile, are completed by drummer Justin Mirarck, the well-oiled engine keeping the momentum flowing. With songs melancholic and rarely changing gear, it risks getting stuck in metal mud, so there are some welcome detours in *Emergence*'s second half. Betrayal is a swooning vocal/keyboard ditty, while *Snoodle Goo* and *Goose Noodle* serve up some eccentric instrumental sidesteps before the 10-minute finale *Mandala*. Source aren't visiting any new sonic realms, but this is a useful addition to prog metal's broader canon. **CC**

TEMIC

Terror Management Theory SEASON OF MIST

An enjoyable yet formulaic introduction from the prog metal supergroup.

Comprising current and former members of Haken, The Neal Morse Band, Shining and others, Temic's debut album arrives with high expectations. Although it scratches a fundamental prog metal itch, it does little to establish the quartet as an eclectic and individualistic new project.

It's not entirely without interesting moments. The soaring harmonies and unpredictable arrangements of *Count Your Losses*, *Mothallah* and Skeletons are impressive, but more often, *Terror Management Theory* is a sleek yet derivative hodgepodge of familiar sounds and ideas. *Through The Sands Of Time* and *Acts Of Violence* evoke the bombastic, melodramatic songwriting and vocal style of Threshold and Evergrey, much like the complex instrumentation of *Friendly Fire* and *Falling Away* hew too closely to the timbres and techniques that Dream Theater and Symphony X have been using for decades.

Terror Management Theory showcases a ton of potential – and listeners hoping for mere genre requisites will almost certainly be satisfied – but Temic need to move beyond expertly performed pastiches to truly attain their own identity. **JMB**

THIS WINTER MACHINE

The Clockwork Man WHITE KNIGHT

Downbeat storytelling and musical familiarity from UK proggers.

This Winter Machine's fourth album is a concept record centred around a near-future in which sterile human clones populate a new underclass tasked with jobs of drudgery and danger.

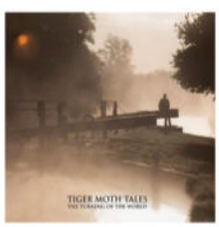
Vocalist, founder and last remaining original member Al Winter is still the main motive force and songwriter, so the album's overall sound doesn't deviate too far from what TWM fans might expect. Guitar-centric, hard rock-leaning narrative songs with neo-prog synth flourishes front and centre in the likes of *Solitude*, *Silence And Steam*, with its scintillating guitar solo from John Cook, and *Final Goodbye* combine with the occasional reflective interlude like the sombre piano-led *The River – Pt 2* and plaintive guitar and voice of *Nothing Lasts Forever*. Musically, the protagonist's journey is suitably mirrored, from the glowering yet powerful first half of *The River* which dares to hint at hope through to the dark, angered resignation and rather abrupt ending of *Falling Through A Hole In The Sky*.

It's a solid enough follow-up to 2021's *Kites* but disappointingly there are no major developments in sound or composition. **GMM**

TIGER MOTH TALES

The Turning Of The World WHITE KNIGHT

Adroit all-rounder crafts charming opus.



As a versatile musician who plays for Camel and Cyan among others, Peter Jones has long proven his uncommon ability. It's on his own project, as Tiger Moth Tales, where his songwriting talent comes to the fore, and this might be his most agreeable album yet. Some of his earlier work has bordered on being too sweet or ornate, but here, while good nature still emanates from every line, there's a restraint which allows the songcraft to do the heavy lifting, and if melancholy sometimes fleetingly invades the sunny optimism, then so be it. His rich voice retains a husky, very Peter Gabriel base note, and the mid-period Genesis prog structures of the title track or *The Snail*, *The Horse And The River* transmit their compassion tranquilly. Stories of lost friends and family who have passed away are conveyed simply but effectively, while as counterbalance the joy of the everyday shines through *So Wonderful To Be Alive* and the saxophone-tinged *The Beautiful People*. Instrumental flourishes, when they come, are impressive without lapsing into ostentation, and the Bread-like soft rock of *All I Need Today* makes light of the end of the world. Absorbing. **CR**

AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST

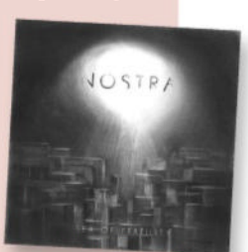
Grant Moon has a rummage down the back of the *Prog* sofa for the ones that nearly got away...

Australian artist **John Greenwood** is best known in these parts as the lead guitarist for Unitopia, and his sterling solo album *Dark Blue* (bit.ly/johngreenwoodprog) was produced by his bandmate Sean Timms. With a largely orchestral palette and a theatrical sweep, this rich, earnest, beautifully made prog record considers the evils and sadnesses of the modern world, the thoughtful lyrics underpinned by maturely sensational guitar playing and musicianship throughout. Steve Hackett has supplied a favourable foreword for *Dark Blue*, and rightly so – it's a wonderful surprise, and Greenwood deserves broader attention for it.

Another group meriting a wider audience in the Northern hemisphere is Chile's **Tryo**. Over their 35 years together they've opened for the likes of Yes, Adrian Belew and Focus, and their powerful new concept album, *Suramérica* (Myolodon), shows what a tight unit they really are. Theirs is a nuanced, highly listenable combination of jazz fusion lines and harmony infused melodies, and the atmospheric, pure prog soundscape they create is at once exotic and familiar. Strong stuff.

Dave Gilmour-esque lead guitars, Tony Banks-y Mellotrons, and spirited male/female harmonies are just some of the ingredients in the nostalgic, dramatic world of **Mourning Knight**. The Westchester, NY proggers leave no trope unexplored on their second, self-released album – *A World Of Dreams* opens with 17-minute opus *A Fractured Fairytale* and closes with 14-minuter *The Harlequin's Carnival*. It may be proudly derivative but there's definitely heart and soul here, with plenty for neo fans to enjoy.

Based in the Wirral, **Spirergy** is the brainchild of Welsh composer/instrumentalist Dave Allen, and numerous proggy influences – Steve Hillage, Pink Floyd, Supertramp and Jon Anderson come to mind – on their self-released *Aeon*. Allen's voice is fragile but clear and pleasant, his guitar and synth game is strong, and the melodic ideas on *Chasing Your Mind*, *Forever* and sprawling 12-minuter *Ice Winds* more than make up for the album's modest production budget.



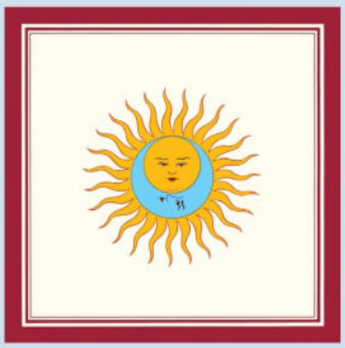
French-Latvian post-rock/post-metal trio **Nostra** make a massive, ArcTanGent-pleasing noise on *Sea Of Fertility* (nostraofficial.bandcamp.com). It's a convincing, darkly grand hour of music – industrially moody in parts, disco-groovy in others. Guitarist Harijs Ljabs, bassist Xavier Landes and drummer Einārs Kotāns have remarkable chemistry and (as seems to be the theme this month), they deserve more ears.

And finally, Nottingham nonet **Seas Of Mirth** crank up the quirk on their crowd-funded LP *Kriller* (seasofmirth.bandcamp.com). This is more crazy, upbeat, funky music, the Mirth delivering some dazzling musical fireworks with a cheeky grin. It's a clever, uplifting, fun experience, like a foam party hosted by Zappa and Tame Impala.

KING CRIMSON

Larks' Tongues In Aspic: 50th Anniversary Edition PANEGYRIC

Landmark album celebrated with new golden jubilee mixes.



King Crimson always stalked the more extreme and art-driven end of prog rock. Creating a whole new vernacular, *Larks' Tongues In Aspic* has weathered the last five decades well. Indeed, this is an album that inhabits a space in which King Crimson are the sole inhabitants. And while they're largely seen as the product of idiosyncratic

> **The new mixes shine a light on a well-trodden path.**

guitarist Robert Fripp, their best work under the Crimson banner has always been the result of collaboration rather than dictatorship. Ergo this, the band's fifth album, which is now celebrating its golden anniversary.

What makes *Larks' Tongues In Aspic* such an enduring and rewarding experience is that this particular line-up — mainstay Robert Fripp, drummer Bill Bruford, bassist and vocalist John Wetton, violinist David Cross and percussionist Jamie Muir — subscribed to a discipline that was lacking on the albums immediately following their debut, *In The Court Of The Crimson King*. Here, the improvisational runs are characterised by a lean focus that serves and bolsters the songs, so while this is music that's definitely 'out there', it first and foremost blasts off from the ground up.

Witness *Larks' Tongues In Aspic Part 1* where the enigmatic opening percussion doesn't so much meander as tease before giving way to David Cross' urgent violin strokes and Fripp's fuzzed guitar, which then explodes into a catharsis of sonic violence. Each section that follows ushers in the next, for here is a road map with a clear destination. Nothing is left to chance. Likewise *The Talking Drum*, which rises incrementally with all the intensity of water being brought to the boil. Among the chaos stands John Wetton, whose tuneful and melodic contributions are the anchor that moors this turbulent ship, most notably on *Easy Money*.

This 50th anniversary edition contains two new mixes of the album. Though differing from each other, they both compliment the original album. Steven Wilson offers an understated sheen that's most evident on Fripp's beautifully sustained guitar-playing during *The Talking Drum*, while Wetton's bass punches through without detracting from the original. Elsewhere on the second CD, David Singleton's mixes of early takes of both parts of the title track, *Easy Money* and *The Talking Drum* offer a greater degree of separation that give insight into the creative process, though the Blu-ray with just about everything that was recorded for the album perhaps over-eggs this particular pudding. Nonetheless, it remains a milestone worth celebrating via mixes that shine a light on a well-trodden path.

JULIAN MARSZALEK

MESHUGGAH

Chaosphere ATOMIC FIRE

Djent pioneers' pivotal third album turned up to 11 for its 25th anniversary.

Meshuggah were never a basic metal band. The signs for polyrhythmic development and their approach to vocals and guitars from a different angle were apparent in debut album *Contractions Collapse* (1991) and its follow-up *Destroy, Erase, Improve,* released in 1995.

But in 1998, their third record plotted a new curve, along lines of progressive hardcore, industrial music and jazz fusion, shifting slightly away from their death and thrash influences. Whether it was conscious or not, they hit upon their own kind of infectious, rhythmic grid. On each song, every instrument in the group – and Jens Kidman's barked vocal – adhered to a pattern, locked into a mathematical mesh where subtle, telepathic compositional changes seemed to occur more frequently, and confidently, than before. These changes often tripped a listener up, but still bound them happily within a groove topped with sly, seven-string atonal solos that would become one of many signature details. Here's another: "We kept the 4/4 beat going so we could still headbang," said drummer and lyricist Tomas Haake, but the 4/4 would have competing guitar chugs and snare hits to throw you off, such as on *New Millennium Cyanide Christ*. This was the shape of things to come for the band, and eventually the birth of the immensely successful metal sub-genre, djent.

Recorded in Dug Out studios by melodic death metal producer Daniel Bergstrand and Meshuggah's lead guitarist Fredrik Thordendal, *Chaosphere* has now had a 25th anniversary tidy-up, and will be issued on coloured splatter and circle vinyl. In 2008 a *Reloaded* version appeared with a brightened quality. The new edition is served up as 'hi-def', and mixed way louder (should that be hi-deaf?). The raw, frantic energy of *The Mouth Licking What You've Bled* and the mad, avant-garde moments of the relentless, 15-minute *Elastic* might be too much for some listeners, but wow, what a way to push a boundary forward. **JK**

DUNCAN PARSONS

I'm Here, All Weak DUNCANPARSONS.BANDCAMP.COM

Curious retrospective collection from British multi-instrumentalist.

With a fascinating and varied career, multi-instrumentalist Duncan Parsons has appeared as the drummer with the John Hackett Band, the bassist for Joanne Harris' Storytime Band and as collaborator with all manner of other artists.

More a sampler of his solo output since 2012 than a brand-new album, the humorously titled *I'm Here, All Weak* brings together choice remixes, re-recordings and edits of tracks from his six studio albums and adds a couple of previously unreleased cuts. Although Parsons has an identifiable voice, both vocally and musically, it's sometimes hard to get a handle on the direction of travel from one track to the next; previously unreleased instrumental *Queenie And Elmo At The Museum* is a sunny Latin jazz-influenced acoustic number, while on *Footnote In Your Heart*'s gentle guitar-led folky reflection on lost love and the similarly styled *Wond'ring A'lowed*, Parsons presents as a slightly more assertive Nick Drake. *Furry Leaves* sounds like a comedy jazz lounge band take on Beethoven's *Für Elise* with a random rock guitarist (in reality the highly talented Nick Fletcher) plugging in for an incongruous solo in the middle section.

There are some lovely lyrical constructions and appearances from guests as varied as John Hackett on flute, the legendary bassist Leland Sklar and Kayak's founder and keyboardist Ton Scherpenzeel. It is consistently raw (not in a pejorative sense) and acutely intimate – even, inexplicably, with a celestial 130-voice choir joining in final track *Take Me By The Hand* – and often sounds like something beamed from an earlier, more innocent musical era. This isn't to damn with faint praise – it's a thoughtful, sometimes unexpected and worthwhile musical journey, made more intriguing by brief context provided by Parsons for each track. However, with mostly acoustic instruments and relatively sparse arrangements, it's a human antithesis to so much overly slick, expansive 21st-century rock music. **GMM**

STEELY DAN

Aja GEFFEN/UME

The Dan's not quite jazz, not quite rock classic.

In 1977, as half the planet spiked up its hair and the other half honed its disco moves, Steely Dan decided to redefine the relationship between jazz and rock. They succeeded to the extent that while *Aja* is usually, for convenience, labelled jazz rock, or even as a key player in launching yacht rock, it remains completely unique. Its warm, smooth sound and impeccably clean production veil slightly less cynical lyrics than its creators' usual, but still they seem allergic to sentiment, to emoting. *Deacon Blues* may romanticise the loner, but as soon as it feigns to admit it with '*I cried when I wrote this song,*' it swiftly follows that with, '*Sue me if I play too long.*' Most of the tracks are lengthy (for the era), yet for all their musical prowess they glide and cruise rather than opt for flash. The album's also an expansive exploration of Californian funk which is so high-brow that you can hear it for years before realising how damn funky it is. Now remastered for the first time in decades, as part of an ongoing vinyl reissue series, it's another chance to marvel at Fagen and Becker's obsessive perfectionism and producer Gary Katz's patience. Audiophiles will swoon. Musicians from saxophonist Wayne Shorter to guitarist Lee Ritenour understand the assignment, and while the much-sampled *Peg* and *Josie* ('*She's the raw flame, the live wire*') share some DNA with the grooves which guide *The Royal Scam* and *Gaucho*, the title song sets a new benchmark for sophistication. Its shifts, in context, are somehow both subtle and seismic.

It's easy to understand why the band to this day leave some music fans cold, as on the surface *Aja* is polished so slickly it denies the friction which draws your ears in. Once that fine film of funk is discerned, however, it can't be undiscerned. *Aja* sold by the truckload, and its reputation as a rare masterpiece is now indestructible. Pristine yet quietly perverse, this reissue quasi-rocks. **CR**

MIDGE URE

The Gift CHRYSALIS

Versatile Ultravox man's debut expanded.

While he's hardly synonymous with the genre this publication is dedicated to, there are few styles that Midge Ure hasn't dipped a musicianly toe into over the years. His appreciation for prog is reflected in his choice of cover on this debut album, released at the height of his post-Band Aid fame in 1985 and now reissued as a 58-track deluxe edition. His take on Jethro Tull's *Living In The Past* boldly filters it through an electro-funk reimagining, but what Ure clearly understood is that its percussive structure means it can withstand this kind of rebuild. The rendition of the central flute hook on an airy synth shouldn't work, but it does.

No.1 single *If I Was* is a pomp-pop earworm familiar to millions, but lesser-known numbers have dated just as gracefully, give or take the odd anachronistic drum machine sound. *When The Winds Blow* and *She Cried* have a similarly anthemic romantic sweep to them, and *Wastelands* is prog in spirit if not entirely in form, an emotive hymn to youthful follies (from a man of 31, ancient in post-punk terms): '*The boy is listening to those records from the past/ He wants to make them last for they make him feel alive.*'

The use of Japanese koto on the instrumental *Edo* is a more daring diversion, and *The Chieftan* employs Mark King's urgent slap bass loops and ethnically charged percussion to create something truly unusual, the kind of thing you'd have expected Ultravox to come up with in their earlier, more experimental days.

Highlights of the many extras here include the Eno-ish ambience of *Textures*, another successful cover – this time a Moog-tastic reading of Bowie's *The Man Who Sold The World* – and the can't-believe-it's-not-Japan strains of *After A Fashion*, with that band's Mick Karn contributing typically lizardly bass lines. All of which add to the impression that this is an artist possessing far more chameleonic talents than he is often given credit for. **JS**

XTC

The Big Express BURNING SHED

Neglected 80s progressive pop gem gets the Wilson treatment.

In 1984, seven albums deep into their career, things weren't quite going XTC's way. Having been chastened by the indifference that greeted 1983's *Mummer*, the Wiltshire progressive art-rockers stubbornly sought to up the ante with follow-up *The Big Express*, a concept record largely influenced by their hometown Swindon and its famous railway shed, Swindon Works.

> **A stubbornly baroque album with a wilful lack of restraint.**

Train Running Low On Soul Coal became the spring from which the songs would flow, with chief songwriter Andy Partridge exploring his existential tribulations through the titular metaphor over a chugging, industrial sample. It wasn't all insular parochialism — *This World Over* addresses geopolitics, and in particular the oh-so-80s topic of the proliferation of nuclear warheads and the feeling that it could only be a matter of time before somebody used them (the line where the protagonist's children ask, *'What was London like?'* speaks volumes).

If the plan had been to get commercially back on track, then what XTC actually made was a stubbornly baroque pop album where Partridge and producer David Lord demonstrated a wilful lack of restraint. With new toys at their disposal, including a Mellotron and a full 24 tracks to play with, *The Big Express* feels like a labyrinthine opera with harmonic vocal passages that come off like the British answer to Brian Wilson's then-mythical *Smile* album. It's ostentatious and even maddening at times, but there's no faulting the ambition.

Almost inevitably, the record-buying public at the time were as incurious as they had been about *Mummer*, but disdain also came from some quarters of XTC's fanbase. Yet *The Big Express* has weathered far better than the Swindon Works that inspired it, demolished in 1986. Nearly 40 years on, the album teems with invention and surprises: *Seagulls Screaming Kiss Her, Kiss Her* is a swirly, psychedelic trip to the seaside where madness can be purchased almost as easily as a bucket and spade. *I Bought Myself A Liarbird* and *Shake You Donkey Up* are emphatically, naggingly insistent, the latter hypertrophying on 5/4 tangents that prove irresistible, despite their complexity.

This is XTC in excelsis, for those who can handle such a riotous melodic imposition. Steven Wilson's mixes arrive on CD a year after *The Big Express* was reissued on vinyl, and his steady hand brings some much-needed clarity to an album brimming over with ideas. It's as though it was made for 5.1 Surround Dolby Atmos three decades before the technology even existed.

JEREMY ALLEN

POMEGRANATE TIGER

INSTRUMENTAL PROGRESSIVE METAL WIZARDRY

NEW ALBUM "ALL INPUT IS ERROR" AVAILABLE NOW!

WWW.POMEGRANATETIGER.COM

SCAN HERE TO LISTEN OR BUY

WHITE WILLOW

Ignis Fatuus KARISMA RECORDS

A glow-up for a milestone of the Norwegian prog revival.

Originally released in 1995, and last reissued 10 years ago, White Willow's debut album receives a fresh lick of paint from Karisma Records as it arrives on vinyl for the very first time. The 2013 re-release from Termo Records had a remaster by Jens Petter Nilsen from the electronica duo Xploding Plastix. This time the music has been remastered by White Willow's guitarist Jacob Holm-Lupo, one of the producers of the original recording.

Ignis Fatuus may have been born smack-dab in the middle of the 90s, but it's far cry from the synthesised sounds of neo-prog or the distorted guitars of 90s alternative rock. Instead, the sound harks back to folk and early prog of the 60s, occasionally venturing out into the realms of Renaissance music. The instrumentation reflects the diverse range of styles, with an array of acoustic guitars, flutes and pipes, violin, and the Clavinet to recreate the sound of the clavichord, an instrument invented in the late Middle Ages. There's old school and then there's ye olde school. These are paired with electric bass, drums, Moogs, Mellotrons and the Fender Rhodes, bringing the sound into the 20th century – and early Genesis seems like a clear reference point for the band's proggier inclinations.

Holm-Lupo's remaster brings out the best of the material, creating a greater sense of depth in the mix. It's not an album where there's a huge weight to the low end, the drums are tuned high, the kick drum maintains an unobtrusive presence, and the bass playing is nimble rather than rumbling, but Holm-Lupo gives everything its own space and room to breathe. Compared to the 1995 version, the colours are more vibrant and everything sounds cleaner and fresher.

Highlights include *The Withering*, a sprightly romp that encompasses the entire breadth of the band's musical range, and *John Dee's Lament*, which gives full expression to White Willow's prog rock proclivities with a rare heavy guitar riff and a bewitching piano melody. Well worth a revisit. **DW**

YES

Yessingles RHINO

Far from definitive single LP collection of the band's seven-inchers.

Right from their first single, *Sweetness*, released in 1969, with its B-side of Leonard Bernstein's *Something's Coming* from *West Side Story*, Yes' music has always carried a strong melodic pop element. But at the same time, they also enjoyed and excelled at writing longer tunes that often landed around the 10-minute mark. And so if they were going to have any representation in the singles chart, an eight-minute-plus song with a memorable verse and chorus such as *Roundabout* needed some fairly serious cuts.

The single edit, included on this patchily incomplete 'greatest hits' compilation, ignores the acoustic guitar intro, then cuts straight from the end of the second verse into the organ solo, allowing it to clock in at a more radio-friendly 3:27. It sounds structurally odd in the process but it did give Yes a breakthrough hit in the US in 1972. *Sound Chaser* is recast as an instrumental, losing the verses, but retaining the brief chanting section and all the eccentric tempo changes, which makes it fun after a fashion, but almost completely uncommercial. *Owner Of A Lonely Heart* only loses half a minute, but for most listeners its identity came from radio plays anyway. And *America*, the cover of the Simon And Garfunkel tune, works well in condensed form rather than the rather sprawling full-length version.

These 12 tracks are claimed to be Yes' biggest singles, yet there are some obvious omissions. *It Can Happen* from *90125*, which was a sizable hit in the US, is notable by its absence, while *Soon* is included and that didn't chart at all. This selection was made to fit on an LP, but as the band have released 41 singles so far, it's only part of the story. There's some good music, of course, but most of it was reshaped for expediency rather than for aesthetic reasons. For example, the fact that *Yessingles* includes a rare promo radio edit of *And You And I (Part One)*, also available for download for the first time, is unlikely to get fans jumping up and down with excitement. **MB**

FRANK ZAPPA

Over-Nite Sensation UMC

More songs about sex, death and dental floss.

Though Frank Zappa occupies a hallowed role as an important cultural agent provocateur and far-sighted social commentator, he was largely a marginal figure commercially during his early years. Released in 1973, *Over-Nite Sensation* changed all that, becoming his first certified gold disc and laying the ground for a newly energised composer to pursue myriad personal projects.

> **Early versions show just how durable the material was.**

Honouring its importance in Zappa's overall catalogue, the 50th-anniversary edition is a sumptuous affair. The five-disc (four-CD/one-Blu-ray audio) version boasts 88 tracks including 57 previously unreleased mixes from the vaults, two complete and previously unreleased 1973 live recordings. There are also new Atmos and surround sound mixes, though these were unavailable to *Prog* at the time of reviewing.

Early working versions of this material, even when rendered as instrumentals, show how durable and robust they actually are in terms of composition. On *Fifty-Fifty*, heard minus Ricky Lancelotti's impressively unhinged vocal, George Duke and Jean-Luc Ponty have ample room to do their thing and it sounds like an outtake from *The Grand Wazoo*'s jazzier excursions. *Inca Roads* and *RDNZL*, both held back from the final cut of the album, showcase the talents the composer was able to draw upon, the latter sparkling with Ruth Underwood's dazzling vibraphone. Ponty's sublime playing also catches fire in a too-brief rehearsal snippet of *Dinah-Moe Humm*.

Special mention should go to Tom Fowler's deft, melodious bass work across this entire set, truly the glue holding everything together amid a formidable line-up. Zappa may well be lauded as a genius by some but without this team's heavy lifting these pieces, fuelled and driven by a virtuoso combination of fiery precision, might very likely fail to fly. The charismatic quality of this ensemble, while abundantly evident in the studio, transfers just as well to the stage in the two spectacularly satisfying concerts.

In going for a determinedly commercial musical direction Zappa brilliantly distils his usual discursive writing into strikingly direct and neatly honed compositions. Inevitably these are mostly topped by his bent for comedic, sexually explicit topics. At the time of its recording, Zappa was a 32-year-old man whose recurring obsessions and humour were straight out of the schoolboy locker room — opinions may vary on how well that side of the Zappa equation holds up. In 2004, biographer Barry Miles concluded that Zappa's lyrics were ultimately unimportant. "It is the music that will last," he observed. Fifty years after *Over-Night Sensation*'s original release, he's not wrong.

SID SMITH

Winter Savings

SUBSCRIBE FROM JUST £6

PLUS OFFERS ON BINDERS, GUIDES & SPECIALS

See the entire range online at

MAGAZINESDIRECT.COM/WINTER23

or phone **0330 333 1113**

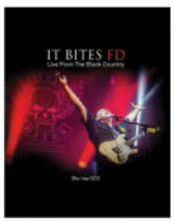
Outside of the UK? See our international offers online

Offer closes 31st December 2023. Offer open to new subscribers only. Direct Debit offer is available to UK subscribers only. We will notify you in advance of any price changes. All gift subscriptions will start with the first available issue on-sale after December 2023. If you would like your gift subscription to start with an earlier issue, you can choose an earlier issue when ordering or you can contact customer services. Orders purchased for yourself will start with the next available issue - please allow up to 6 weeks for delivery (up to 8 weeks outside of the UK). Payment is non-refundable after the 14 day cancellation period unless exceptional circumstances apply. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries please call: +44 (0)330 333 1113. Lines are open Monday-Friday, 8:30am-7pm, and Saturday, 10am-3pm GMT (excluding Bank Holidays) or e-mail: help@magazinesdirect.com. Calls from the UK to 0330 numbers will be charged at no more than a national landline call, and may be included in your phone provider's call bundle.

FRANCIS DUNNERY'S IT BITES

Live From The Black Country TIGERMOTH

Original frontman reclaims his legacy with joy and authenticity.



In recent years, original It Bites singer/guitarist Francis Dunnery seems to have had a change of heart about the band he co-founded in 1982, shifting from decidedly cool to warmly embracing it. Every January since 2018 – the pandemic years excepted – he's played a handful of UK gigs as Francis Dunnery's It Bites. This Blu-ray/CD captures this January's set: two hours of IB's instantly identifiable fusion of prog, hard rock, 80s pop and Cumbrian chutzpah.

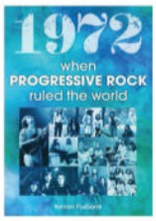
With a terrific band, including British prog luminaries Peter Jones and Cyan/The Tangent's Luke Machin, he cherry-picks from the three extraordinary albums It Bites released between 1986 and 1989. There's the powerful yet quirky rocker *All In Red*, anthemic toy shop fantasy of *Plastic Dreamer*, raw 'love or obsession?' strains of *Underneath Your Pillow*, the none-more-80s *Turn Me Loose* and criminally overlooked prog epic *Once Around The World*.

The package looks great and the sound has a transparency that provides real definition and separation. Most of these songs really don't sound like they're from over 40 years ago and as a celebration of an important British prog legacy, it doesn't get much better than this. **GMM**

1972: WHEN PROGRESSIVE ROCK RULED THE WORLD

Kevan Furbank SONICBOND

A snapshot of an eventful year in prog.



Right from the off, Kevin Furbank – the author of previous Sonicbond books on Gong, Fairport Convention, and psychedelic rock from 1967 – readily acknowledges that the problem of a list-based tome, such as this, is that it's based entirely on his taste. That, of course, means that not everyone is going to agree with the 22 albums he concentrates on in this 1972 focused book. Accepting that one person's classic is another's clunker, there's no dissension with the inclusion of big hitters such as Jethro Tull, Yes and ELP. Alongside them, space is given to relevant releases from underdogs Strawbs and Matching Mole, as well as a host of European arrivals including Can, Neu!, PFM, Focus and even Aphrodite's Child.

While the presence of Santana's *Caravanserai* or Uriah Heep's *Demons And Wizards* seem to run the risk of opening up the dreaded 'What is prog?' debate, they do at least disrupt what might otherwise be a parade of the usual suspects. And while many of the background stories Furbank tells will be familiar to much of the target audience, he does shoehorn in some fresh informational snippets in a breezy, prosaic style. **SS**

THE ROCK ARTIST'S PROGRESS

Charles Shorwell SPIRIT OF UNICORN MUSIC

Highly entertaining and nostalgic comic novel from Darryl Way.

Charles Shorwell is the nom de plume of Curved Air co-founder/violinist Darryl Way, who proves to be a natural storyteller in this highly entertaining, nostalgic comic novel. Set amid the dope-wreathed counterculture of late 60s, the story opens with pianist Daniel Luckham coming down from the mother of all acid trips in his London bedsit. Like Way himself, he's studying at the Royal College Of Music, but an early encounter with Spooky Tooth, a love of The Beatles and a drug bust see Luckman drawn inexorably into the rock world.

The colourful tale is populated by musos, crusty hippies, dodgy dealers and dodgier managers, homely girls and femmes fatales. Shorwell/Way's style is conversational, funny and – at nearly 500 pages – loquacious. He evokes the era vividly, with smells (hashish, boiled cabbage), cultural touchstones (*The Magic Roundabout*, Peter O'Toole) and, of course, the music. The Incredible String Band, The Nice, Denmark Street and Vox Continental organs are brush strokes in the rich picture, as Luckman dives deep into the rock'n'roll life.

It may be a work of fiction, but *The Rock Artist's Progress* was clearly written by someone who knows the territory. A really enjoyable read. **GRM**

STEWART COPELAND'S POLICE DIARIES

Stewart Copeland ROCKET 88

'Ello, 'ello, 'ello, what do we have here, then?

"This is the story of a struggle, but don't worry, it does get very cheerful," writes Stewart Copeland in the introduction to his *Police Diaries*, a lovingly detailed and comprehensively illustrated chronicle of The Police's years from formation to their first American tour. While other groups opportunistically rode the post-Pistols bandwagon, few had a past as visible as at least two-thirds of the peroxide power players. Not just flirting with the enemy

> **A forensic timeline of how prog turned into punk.**

of the old guard, but in Copeland's case literally sleeping with them, as the long-term partner of Sonja Kristina, lead vocalist of Curved Air, the group in which he drummed. Guitarist Andy Summers had the joint distinction of being old (35 when he joined) and had played with Soft Machine and Kevin Coyne. It was only Sting who rose without trace, although his jazz rock roots were closely scrutinised. It seemed as if, as a result, The Police tried harder to break through, and without a shadow of a doubt did their 10,000 hours in punk toilets across the UK and backwaters throughout the US.

Copeland kept a diary from January 1976 to October 1978, just as the band properly took off. That document, published here as *Stewart Copeland's Police Diaries*, encompasses not only the rise of a fledgling group, but a collapse of an old one, a lost London, and a forensic timeline of how prog turned into punk. The grinding mundanity of motorway service stations and cross-Channel ferries are ameliorated by the almost illicit thrills of Indian meals, all captured in Copeland's scrawl, updated with modern-day commentary. There is a glorious cast of figures throughout — some well-known and some long forgotten — to the point where Copeland helpfully offers a comprehensive who's who at the start.

One of the highlights is a party at Copeland's squat in Mayfair in December 1976, just after he has first met Sting and soon before Curved Air are to split. The shindig is for Al Stewart and his "bellbottomed backgammon elite", no less, and is crashed by many of the Sex Pistols entourage, a day or so after they had terrorised Bill Grundy on *Today*. Copeland witnesses first-hand the changing of the guard.

With his pithy self-depreciation Copeland is the perfect narrator for his own tale. Stopping as The Police transition from theatres to arenas, it offers a freeze-frame of all that had been before the global success and power struggles that lay ahead. Only docked a micro-spotter's point for suggesting his brother would have been playing Chic in 1976, a year before they formed, *Stewart Copeland's Police Diaries* is a rollicking, joyous ride that should not be missed.

DARYL EASLEA

Take a bow

YES

VENUE	THE MET, PHILADELPHIA, PA, USA
DATE	22/09/2023

Regardless of how many 'classic' members remain, Yes deserve praise for keeping on after more than half a century. They're likely *the* longest-standing progressive rock group still active both onstage and in the studio, and as their nearly two-hour set tonight proves, they remain masters of their craft. It's not a perfect evening, but it's certainly a satisfying one, and it undoubtedly validates them as an act still well worth seeing.

Prior to Yes' performance, celebrated artist Roger Dean – who's worked with the band on/off since 1971's *Fragile* and contributed to this year's *Mirror To The Sky* – gives a 30-minute overview of his artistic beginnings and accomplishments. Despite his humble tone, appealing insights and early illustrations, his presentation isn't as well-received as it should be and before long, several intolerant concertgoers rudely heckle him and demand that Yes finally come out on stage.

> **"A satisfying evening that undoubtedly validates Yes as an act still well worth seeing."**

Once Yes do appear, however, they are deservedly met with standing ovations and deafening applause. Considering that the night is billed as The Classic Tales Of Yes Tour, it's no surprise that they focus mainly on their seminal 1970s repertoire.

Among the best selections are *Going For The One*, *I've Seen All Good People*, *South Side Of The Sky*, *Time And A Word* and, for the encore, *Roundabout* and *Starship Trooper*. Barely stepping into the next decade is *Machine Messiah* from 1980's *Drama* as well, and they even make sure to throw in an instrumental version of their famous take on Simon & Garfunkel's *America*.

That said, the greatest section comes near the end, when they launch into a breathtaking medley – or a "new interpretation", as Steve Howe puts it – of *Tales From Topographic Oceans*. It's about as lengthy as a traditional prog rock epic, and it incorporates passages from all four side-long movements (*The Revealing Science Of God*, *The Remembering*, *The Ancient* and *Ritual*).

Save for a few awkward vocal harmonies and missed notes from Howe, they pull off everything wonderfully. Despite what many die-hard Yes aficionados might say, frontman Jon Davison (who joined in 2012) does an excellent job capturing Jon Anderson's voice *and* vibe as much as possible, too.

The same holds true for the newer material, which, for better or worse, consists of only two songs: *It Will Be A Good Day (The River)* from 1999's *The Ladder*, and *Cut From The Stars* from *Mirror To The Sky*. Although it's understandable why they prioritised so many fan favourites, it's nonetheless a bit strange for them to feature only one selection from their 23rd studio record considering that it came out mere months ago.

While their playing more or less lives up to expectations, unfortunately Yes' imagery is considerably underwhelming. There aren't many visuals aside from a handful of alternating coloured spotlights, various abstract patterns on screen, and, during some particularly complex and heavy bits, frantic strobe lights.

Obviously the music is the main draw – and the concert is meant to be a wistful commemoration for those who've been there from the beginning – but the lack of more spectacle is disappointing. At the very least, they could've shuffled through projections of Dean's artwork to liven up and contextualise the experience (especially since the man himself had a slideshow ready to go).

Such criticisms aside, however, Yes offer a thoroughly rousing, nostalgic and expertly performed evening from start to finish.

The legend that is Roger Dean: do *not* heckle this man!

Yes in the spotlight. Geddit? *Spot*-light? There are spots? Arf.

FRANK WHITE

After all, several of their most beloved compositions are included (although it's odd for both *Close To The Edge* and *The Gates Of Delirium* to be absent, given the tour's gimmick). Additionally, Davison and Howe's enthusiasm and their periodic interactions with the audience make the whole affair more communal and celebratory.

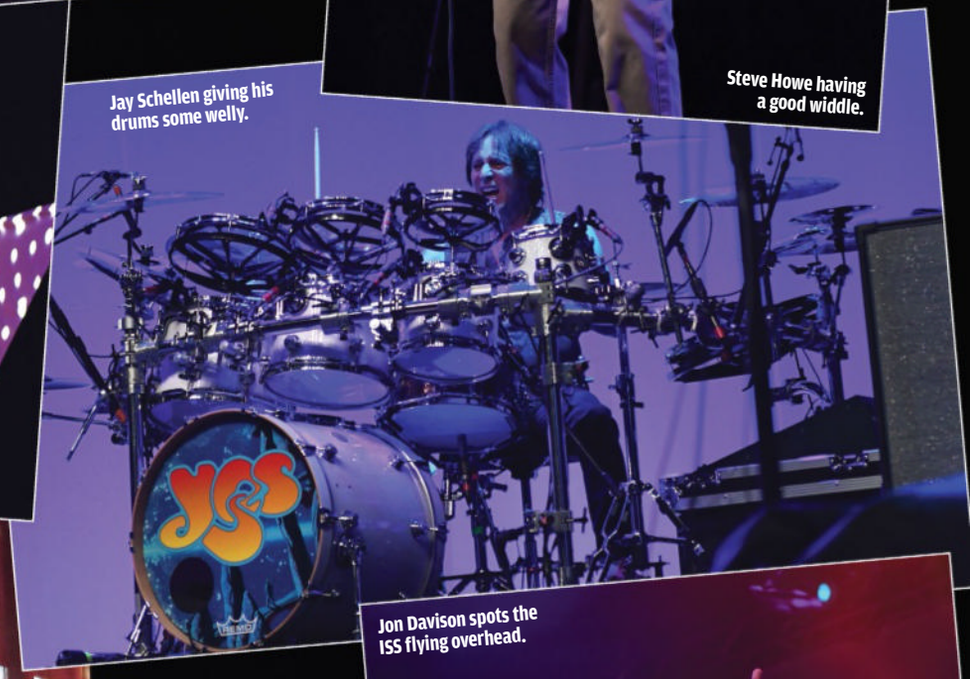
No matter how some fans feel regarding the current band's legitimacy, there's no denying that they do the Yes catalogue justice.

JORDAN BLUM

Billy Sherwood sails a topographic curtain.

Geoff Downes, thoroughly enjoying himself.

Steve Howe having a good widdle.



Jay Schellen giving his drums some welly.

Jon Davison spots the ISS flying overhead.

HELD BY TREES

VENUE	THE HALF MOON, LONDON
DATE	21/09/2023

Though the notion of a band continuing well after the departure of a key member is hardly new, the idea of musicians who've backed a particular artist getting together after the singer has died is a novel one. Especially if the musicians in question never actually played together at the same time in the same place, even though they served the same master.

Held By Trees are a case in point. Most of the talent gathered here tonight – guitarist and bandleader David Joseph, lead guitarist Robbie McIntosh, drummer Paul Beavis, keyboardist Laurence Pendrous, Andy Panayi on flute, sax and clarinet and James Grant on stand-up and electric bass – backed Mark Hollis either with Talk Talk or in a solo capacity in the studio at points in his career. This proves to be both a strength and a not insurmountable Achilles' heel for the band.

Make no mistake: Held By Trees are mighty fine musicians with each bringing considerable experience and talent to the party. As befits these studio veterans, the sound is balanced and polished to perfection and the instruments played with expertise. But they still have some distance to cover before they become a fully interacting band prepared to take risks while delivering a performance that conveys emotion and interaction. And with schedules that see each of the players earning their bread and butter for big-name artists, the required gelling may take longer than is necessary. Consequently, everything is just so, with nary a hint of grit to be seen.

Lacking a singer, Held By Trees' material never quite soars and the languid pace conspires against them in a live setting. *In The Trees*, with its tremolo guitar, shuffling drums and rippling piano, sets the pace and for the large part stays there. Remaining in this milieu, McIntosh displays his six-string dexterity as he moves from the delays and echoes favoured by David Gilmour to the more twanging sounds of prime-time Mark Knopfler.

Which isn't to suggest that Held By Trees can't hold their own. Indeed, what becomes apparent as their environmentally conscious set continues with *Pure Sunlight* and *The Tree Of Life* is that their music would be better served in the medium of the moving picture. The haunting minimalism of *Mysterium* – the only tune that increases in beats and dynamic – evokes images of an 80s-set English mystery several shades darker than *Midsomer Murders* in much the same way sparse Nordic music has come to define Scandinavia's fictional police procedurals.

Held By Trees find themselves at a crossroads with each destination coming at the expense of another. Which way to go?

JULIAN MARSZALEK

AYREON

VENUE	POPPODIUM 013, TILBURG, NETHERLANDS
DATE	16/09/2023

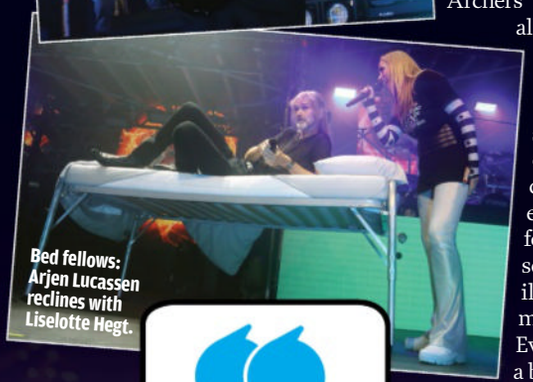
Damian Wilson belts out a tune.

When the normally reclusive Arjen Lucassen presents in the live arena, it's usually something pretty spectacular. Six years ago, in this very venue, *Prog* witnessed Lucassen's first-ever official Ayreon live shows, entitled Ayreon Universe. No fewer than 16 singers and 11 instrumentalists presented an eye-popping spectacle to packed-out crowds.

However, Ayreon playing live in 2023 isn't quite as unique as it once was — Lucassen played Graspop in 2018 and presented 1998's *Into The Electric Castle* at this venue in 2019. But even so, the sheer scope of ambition and execution of five performances (three evening shows and two matinees) of 2007's *01011001* is impressive in the extreme. Add in an Ayreon pop-up shop — the queue for which never seems to dissipate while *Prog* is in attendance — and the fact that Tilburg resembles some kind of alternate reality in which you reside in Ayreon-ville… Well, it's quite jaw-dropping.

The 16 singers (again) with three backing vocalists include the majority of the album's original cast. There's no Floor Jansen, as she's pregnant; no Magnum singer Bob Catley, Jorn Lande or Ty Tabor from King's X; and sadly Gotthard's Steve Lee died in 2010. Damian Wilson, Toehider's Michael Mills, Praying Mantis/Supersonic Revolution singer Jaycee Cuijpers and Unleash The Archers' Brittney Slayes are all more than worthy stand-ins though.

Hot stuff: violinist Ben Mathot, Marcel Coenen and cellist Jurriaan Westerveld.



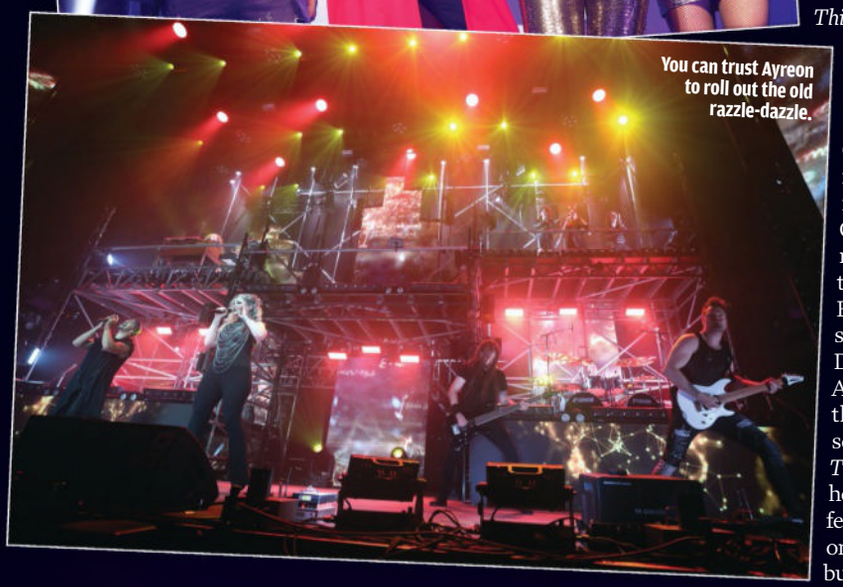
Bed fellows: Arjen Lucassen reclines with Liselotte Hegt.

In place of Ayreon Universe's sword and sorcery approach, *01011001*'s sci-fi concept lends the evening a hi-tech feel with the stage set up with neon illuminations and metallic constructions. Everything opens with a blaze of lights, pyro and no less than eight singers parading through opening cut *Age Of Shadows*. There's Evergrey's Tom S Englund, Anneke van Giersbergen, Pain Of Salvation's Daniel Gildenlöw, Brittney Slayes, Katatonia's Jonas Renkse, Blind Guardian's Hansi

> **"It's a hugely impressive undertaking. You'd be hard pressed to think of another artist who'd be able to curate such an impressive cast."**

PRESS/BERT TREEP

L-R: Tom S Englund, Arjen Lucassen, Anneke van Giersbergen, Simone Simons.



You can trust Ayreon to roll out the old razzle-dazzle.

around backstage as all the other singers dip in and out of the show to grab their spot in the limelight.

Talking of limelight, Epica's Simone Simons may have only sung *Web Of Lies* on the album but her melodic, operatic tones are put to better use tonight, delivering a brilliant *This Human Equation* from 2020's *Transitus*, which is the first encore. Expectedly van Giersbergen shines in her various roles too, as do Gildenlöw and a far more animated than usual Renkse. But the star of the show has to be Damian Wilson. Although part of the wider Ayreon set-up since *Into The Electric Castle*, he didn't actually feature on the original *01011001*, but in his various roles tonight his natural ebullience often acts as a guiding point onstage, while his now-customary epic crowd surf at the end of the show delights an already delirious audience.

Although *Prog* occasionally finds it a struggle to keep up with the myriad comings and goings onstage, the Ayreon faithful simply delight in the evolution of the show — and it has to be said that as a live spectacle it's a hugely impressive undertaking. You'd be hard pressed to think of another artist who'd be able to curate such an impressive cast from the worlds of prog and power metal. Not just for one show, or even the run of shows this time round, but over and over again, as Lucassen has been able to since he began adapting his works for the live arena. One can't really fail to be impressed.

JERRY EWING

Kursch and Cuijpers. It's an eye-popping assault on the senses. But it's difficult to keep track of just what is happening before your eyes!

Lucassen himself appears, resplendent in long red coat, for *Connect The Dots* and later with fellow Dutch singer Liselotte Hegt for *The Truth Is In Here*. It's a slightly bigger role for the man who suffers crippling stage fright than Ayreon Universe, although one feels slightly for Hegt — it's her only appearance, as is *E=mc2* for fellow Dutch singer Wudstik. Imagine hanging

ESBEN AND THE WITCH

VENUE	STUDIO 9294, LONDON
DATE	22/09/2023
SUPPORT	PENELOPE TRAPPES

With the summer fast becoming a distant memory thanks to earlier sunsets and a palpable drop in temperature, the return of ethereal trio **Esben And The Witch** couldn't be better timed. While they continue to defy easy categorisation, their intoxicating blend of post-punk, post-rock, goth, psychedelia and prog is shrouded in a dark mystery that's entirely in keeping with the lengthening shadows outside and the increasingly gentrified industrial environs that cast them. And the plumes of smoke that are emitted periodically from beneath the stage to engulf the largely black-clad audience sure help, too.

This is the band's first UK gig in five years, but their earlier European dates have clearly sharpened their delivery, for what slowly and incrementally unfolds here tonight is an exercise in tension, drama and release. Gossamer opener *The Well* feels like an awakening, with guitarist Thomas Fisher eliciting ghostly chimes from his instrument that feel as if they barely exist. On the other side of the stage, multi-instrumentalist drummer Daniel Copeman temporarily handles the bass duties that free up singer Rachel Davies to draw deep from within herself. Indeed, such is the space and fragility on display that it often feels as if the music could be walked through and examined in an art gallery with Davies' beautifully controlled voice acting as a guide.

Similarly, Australian-born but UK-based **Penelope Trappes**' earlier set utilises the notion of space and sweeping vistas. Working with an array of electronic effects, her haunting voice is sampled and looped several times over to create harmonies that ripple through the venue with waves of increasing force. At times unsettling, at others warm and welcome, her soundscapes elicit the feel of altered states that slip between the realms of consciousness and unconsciousness.

Esben And The Witch's set takes largely from this year's *Hold Sacred* album and that's no bad thing. Their previous release, *Nowhere*, landed five years ago, so the opportunity to be met with new material is to be welcomed as much as savoured. For the most part, the trio are like fleeting shadows dancing in the corner of an eye. Witness *In Ecstasy*: Copeman's increasingly insistent beats usher in and meld with the otherworldly sounds coaxed from Fisher's gradually punished guitar, as Davies' bass locks in to demand.

But the judicious dips into the past reap rich dividends, too. On the fabulously intense *No Dog* the band explode into full colour as they pull up the drawbridge and launch a strike with deadly accuracy. Their last club show for the foreseeable future, those absent fans will feel accursed.

JULIAN MARSZALEK

WISHBONE ASH

VENUE	WYLAM BREWERY, NEWCASTLE
DATE	19/09/2023

"We hardly drink these days," says Wishbone's Ash's venerable leader Andy Powell, alluding to tonight's ale manufacturing venue. Recreating the tracklisting of their classic 1973 LP *Live Dates* (adding *Real Guitars Have Wings* at the beginning plus encores *Living Proof* and *Persephone*), it's clear that the Ash know how to organise a pit stop in a brewery. Though the 7.30pm start has latecomers scrambling for their seats after the slow-building folk prog classic *The King Will Come* has already been crowned, it's apparent that no one will go home feeling short-changed tonight.

Performing a short walk away from the Newcastle City Hall, where parts of the original *Live Dates* were recorded, Wishbone Ash play two 50-minute sets with heart, guts and feeling. Powell sold three of his Gibson Flying Vs to Rudolf Schenker from The Scorpions, but he's kept the best ones, and the two he plays this evening seem like visual metaphors for his arrow-true playing on *Throw Down The Sword* and *Blowin' Free*. It's also abundantly clear why, back in 2017, Powell head-hunted Yorkshire-born guitarist Mark Abrahams for this incarnation of Wishbone Ash. A gifted player with a killer tone, Abrahams brings nuance and understanding to Wishbone Ash material he clearly adores. Indeed, *Prog* posits the band's celebrated twin-leads have rarely – if ever – sounded better.

Powell is in a warm, chatty mood. He recalls how a real-life shooting at a 1971 Wishbone Ash concert in Texas inspired *Rock 'N Roll Widow*, and tells punters to take their time returning to their seats after the break since *Pilgrim* has "a very long intro". Originally from 1971's *Pilgrimage* LP, the song is one of those slow-builders Wishbone Ash do so well, but it also sounds like a pioneering template for mid-period Rush and the whole math rock genre. In 1971, its intricate, mind-boggling riffs were way ahead of their time, and tonight, bassist Bob Skeat and drummer Mike Truscott prove a fine rhythm section, everything on point and tighter than the proverbial Mallard's posterior.

As the evening progresses, the bond between Wishbone Ash and their crowd deepens. Powell's landlady circa 1969 is immortalised in *Lady Whiskey*, and the bandleader speaks touchingly about recent natural disasters in Morocco and Libya, dedicating main set closer *Phoenix* to those who have suffered or perished, and expresses his gratitude for "music, my good friends, and my good life".

Although it's probably the original 1973 *Live Dates* LP that remains closest to long-term fans' hearts, Wishbone Ash's new *Live Dates Live 1973-2023* LP commemorating this tour is a potent entity in its own right. Wishbone Ash are still out there, vital and blowin' free.

JAMES MCNAIR

BIG BIG TRAIN

VENUE	CADOGAN HALL, LONDON
DATE	13/09/2023

After a singular career trajectory that saw only sporadic live performances over three decades, then was derailed by the pandemic and the tragic death of vocalist and multi-instrumentalist David Longdon, Big Big Train are regaining momentum, and this evening's concert is the last night of a 17-date European tour. Bass guitarist and founder member Gregory Spawton wrote in his tour diary that the previous night's show, at the same venue where they also played in 2017 with a different line-up, was an emotional experience.

There's a celebratory feel tonight. Any band would love a fanbase as dedicated as Big Big Train's and the mysterious, ancestral drama of *Folklore*, which opens the set, elicits a standing ovation.

Big Big Train's music is intricate, layered and complex, but importantly their songs pack more of an emotional punch than most modern prog. And new vocalist and multi-instrumentalist Alberto Bravin sings with a mix of control and passion on his first-ever tour as a frontman.

The most recent addition to the live line-up is guitarist Maria Barbieri, who comes from a prog metal background and whose admirers include Robert Fripp. She asserts her personality from the off and her playing is speedy and technically impressive, but to these ears at times it bypasses the emotional core of the music. That said, the crowd love her.

The group's brass ensemble might appear to be a bit garnish, and the combination of tuba, trombone, trumpet and French horn is more colliery band than rock horn section, but it adds a crucial texture and a poignant, age-old English feel. And while the group are international in make-up and outward looking, many of their songs explore these historical roots.

"There's a feeling of elation, perhaps mixed with relief, at the close of the tour, which is reflected in clapalongs and even a heavy metal screaming contest."

Tonight's is an idiosyncratic, oddly paced set. Big Big Train appear to be letting off steam and there's a feeling of elation, perhaps mixed with relief, at the close of the tour, which is reflected in some clapalongs and even a between-song heavy metal screaming contest. They delve back into their archive, playing *A Boy In Darkness*, about a child miner in the 1800s, which is featured live for the first time on this tour and includes some inspired interplay between Barbieri and Clare Lindley's violin. There's a taster for their upcoming album in *Love Is The Light*, Bravin's

Alberto Bravin performs with great passion.

Oskar Holldorff, Maria Barbieri and the brass section.

All aboard the new look Big Big Train!

WILL IRELAND

Bravin, Nick D'Virgilio, Rikard Sjöblom and Greg Spawton are in the zone.

Job well done!

balladic paean to his wife, which culminates in Spawton's bass pedals combining with the brass players to give it a stately feel and considerable heft.

Drums And Brass 2023, a duet between the brass section and drummer Nick D'Virgilio, is played with brio. There are echoes of marching bands and Leonard Bernstein's jazz compositions, with some cheeky quotes from Yes' *Heart Of The Sunrise* thrown in, but feels a bit lightweight when placed mid-set. After the exultant instrumental *Apollo*, which evokes myriad soundtracks and TV themes, it's all over in an hour.

But the encores are similarly lengthy and the unexpected highlight of what was essentially the second half is introduced by D'Virgilio as "something special". Having left his drum stool, he straps on an acoustic guitar for a sort of Big Big Train Unplugged medley, singing the never-performed-before *Leopards*, and then *Meadowland* with Rikard Sjöblom on vocals and 12-string acoustic, and Bravin on vocals and keyboards. Oskar Holldorff joins in on keyboards, and Lindley on violin and brass returns for *Wassail*, which ends up becoming a lengthy singalong.

The evening concludes with two of the band's longer epics, *Victorian Brickwork* and a thrilling version of *East Coast Racer*, with D'Virgilio driving the irresistible locomotive rhythms, with trombonist Dave Desmond starting to cut loose in the majestic end section. The structure of the set might well have benefitted from being front-loaded with these big numbers, but it all worked out in the end. The Journey Continues 2023 tour ends with Big Big Train both taking stock and looking to the future, and we await their next step with great anticipation.

MIKE BARNES

TU-NER

VENUE	REGGIE'S ROCK CLUB, CHICAGO, IL, USA
DATE	26/08/2023

It's not easy being a support act. Is there anyone here to see you? How do you get the crowd's attention? Can you make an impact during a limited set?

Tonight's support, Tu-Ner consist of a virtuoso touch guitarist and two King Crimson alumni so they need not worry about such things. More than a few Crimson fans have gathered at Reggie's Rock Club to catch the action before headliner Greg Howe takes the stage.

It's not difficult to hear an extension of King Crimson when Tu-Ner start their set with an improvisational piece rooted in touch guitarist Markus Reuter's lush soundscapes. When Warr guitarist Trey Gunn and drummer Pat Mastelotto enter, it's easy to hear shades of ProjeKct X, a short-lived side-project of King Crimson's 'Double Duo' era. Mastelotto provides electronic grooves and samples from his drum kit, sneaking in the occasional sample here and there. Gunn (who, unlike in the past, has taken to playing his instrument while seated) provides the low-end grooves and mid-range runs that immediately get the audience a little off-balance, which is precisely where we should be.

The band take music from King Crimson, Sylvian & Fripp, and Stick Men (where it's Tony Levin instead of Gunn) and make the tunes their own. The notes from *The ConstruKction Of Light*, *Firepower* and *Cusp* may have originated elsewhere, but they go through unexpected twists and turns – mostly from Reuter – that change the song's narrative. They're not a tribute band; they offer pure reinterpretations, and it's a sight to see.

Mastelotto expands his percussive palette much farther out than he could within the three-drummer context of the last Crimson. Things he can hit with a stick are everywhere, to say nothing of the fascinating sounds he makes with his Roland HandSonic pad, which provides him with a wide array of electronic noises.

Reuter plays the role of lead guitarist, though his sounds don't necessarily sync up with what one would expect from that instrument. His ability to play both chords and lead lines gives him a much more expansive sound. He even occasionally manages to channel his inner Adrian Belew with his cries and wails. Gunn holds the odd-metered grooves adeptly and with more than a little flourish from his own effects station. The group sound more like – pardon the expression – a double trio as opposed to a three-piece band.

Tu-Ner needn't worry about trying to capture the audience's attention, though. Tonight fans and strangers alike give the band rapt attention from the very first note. A wise move, as it would be a shame to miss something this powerful. This is virtuosity and groove at its finest.

CEDRIC HENDRIX

Take a Bow

65DAYSOFSTATIC

VENUE	NEW CENTURY HALL, MANCHESTER
DATE	15/09/2023

Almost 10 years to the day since the release of their sixth studio album *Wild Light*, Sheffield's experimental post-rockers bring their anniversary celebrations to Manchester's modern-looking New Century Hall. This record about the end of the world – with a little hope poking its peaks and troughs, too – feels even more appropriate now than ever. In today's uncertain landscape, experiencing it performed in its entirety feels a very apt way to spend a rain-battled Friday night.

Opener *Heat Death Infinity Splitter* introduces a wall of sound that many bigger line-ups wouldn't be able to muster, before the swathing, psychedelic keyboards of *Prisms* play off Rob Jones' incessant, energetic drum patterns. While it's gratifying to see keyboardist/guitarist Paul Wolinski so absorbed in his tasks and Joe Shrewsbury prowl the stage with a toothy snarl, it's Jones' rampancy that really draws the eye. Across the record's shadowy but spacious textures, he subtly develops his rhythms, intricately maintaining their forward momentum. *Blackspots* sets spinning synths, journeying bass lines and foreboding ambient guitars on top of Jones' driving, snare-heavy beat with stunning results.

The piano-led lull of *Taipei* provides a melancholic breathing space. *Unmake The Wild Light* effortlessly flits between celestial calms and heavy left-turns, the lights transitioning from bright blues to unsettled green spots on a darkened stage making for a compelling multi-sensory experience. In a heartbeat, 50 minutes fly by and hardly anyone has pulled out their phone to capture the moment. It reflects just how immersive 65daysofstatic are.

After a short break, a far livelier and guitar-driven set follows. *Debutante*, written for the infinite video game *No Man's Sky*, is rich in colour. Its glitching keys, jutting drums and stirring chord progressions create an otherworldly atmosphere before a raw, passionately delivered *Retreat! Retreat!* exhibits the band's earlier sound. *Crash Tactics* blends drum'n'bass with squawking keys and cyclical guitars, which build towards a seismic finale.

They bow out on an encore of *I Swallowed Hard, Like I Understood*. The first song they ever wrote, it lacks the seasoned brilliance of their later work but is a gracious conclusion.

Celebrating 10 years of *Wild Light*'s challenging but rewarding songwriting and succeeding it with a discography-wide showcase, 65daysofstatic show they've never abandoned their core essence. They've experimented with it, evolved, and found a kaleidoscopic range of ways to express themselves, but have always remained true to their identity. As they walk off the stage, tonight's engrossed audience are sent crashing back down to earth.

PHIL WELLER

A SUNDAY IN SEPTEMBER

VENUE	THE BEDFORD, LONDON
DATE	10/09/2023

The Emerald Dawn conjure up mystical sonic worlds.

Opening this third annual celebration of the rich, varied world of prog is an improv set from The Fierce & The Dead's **Matt Stevens** and **Kevin Feazey** (the latter a fitting replacement for an ailing Andy Tillison) on guitar and bass respectively. Both seated and getting thoroughly lost in the process, theirs is a set of four weird, wonderful and otherworldly in-the-moment creations. Employing an arsenal of effects (at one point Feazey deploys a "mystery" pedal just to see what it does), they meld ambient space rock with psychedelia, country, threatening drones and dreamy jazz funk. Gentle waves of sound swirl around and slowly build into walls of noise then dissipate. Stevens stretches his guitar sound in all directions, imitating at different points choral voices, flute or distorted cello. Clearly enjoying the experience and with an audience largely transfixed, 45 minutes simply fly by.

Matt Stevens and Kevin Feazey push all the right pedals.

Appearing here beset with sound problems two years ago, **The Emerald Dawn** suffer no such issues this afternoon, launching into a selection of four tunes that highlight their mostly instrumental, long-form symphonic prog, including a pair of tracks from new album *In Time*. The powerful rush and many shades of *As Darkness Falls* and *Timeless* showcase a band that have grown in confidence over the last couple of years. Although the focus, very understandably, is mainly on Ally Carter and Tree Stewart, handling guitar and keyboards/vocals respectively alongside additional sax and flute, the rhythm section of bassist Dave Greenaway and Tom Jackson on drums is no less deserving of praise. They drive through the odd time signature excursions and give weight to the slower sections, evocative of mist-drenched forests and ancient mysteries, of closer *Out Of Time* with aplomb.

A mid-afternoon break is taken before **The Enid**, presumably mainly to assemble Karl Thompson's drum and percussion set-up, which wouldn't look out of place in a small orchestra. Now in existence longer than some audience

District 97: a headline set of epic proportions.

KEVIN NIXON

A spectacular performance from D97's Leslie Hunt.

The Enid: Godfrey's compositions remain as powerful as ever.

The complex and very energetic Poly-Math.

members have been alive, no one sounds quite like The Enid. Their extraordinary amalgam of rich neo-classical whimsy and rhapsodic rock excursions running the gamut from stately to reflective to majestic to threatening to playful, is given full rein by way of excerpts from *Touch Me* and *The Spell*. They also perform full versions of *Duplicity* and the monumental, multifaceted *Dark Hydraulic*. Robert John Godfrey may be a frail figure nowadays, but the wonder and power of his compositions remain intact.

Young Brighton-based **Poly-Math** are a pleasant surprise for many. Breathlessly complex, tirelessly energetic, meaty off-kilter alt-rock meets Chris Isaak with added tenor sax, they astound with frankly outrageous instrumental tunes. The crazed antics of bassist Joe Branton, who barely stands still and hits a variety of slightly bizarre, if not physically uncomfortable, shapes throughout, and the studied stoic calm of keyboardist Josh Gesner right next to him create a lovely juxtaposition. Playing the whole of latest album *Zenith*, there's precious little downtime bar the respite of *Mora*, which has a dark, sultry *Stranger Things* meets *Twin Peaks* theme tune vibe. They make many new fans this evening.

Off the back of a short European tour, **District 97** close the day with their take on modern art-rock meets symphonic prog. With fifth album *Stay For The Ending* mere weeks away, these ambitious and hugely talented Americans give a suitably headline worthy performance mixing old and new in a set that displays real musical muscle alongside their penchant for counter-intuitive vocal melodies and their ability to entertain. Whether emoting the intro to *Bread & Yarn* or skipping around the stage during new track *Mirror*, Leslie Hunt is a charismatic and tenacious frontwoman, constantly communicating the lyrics and connecting with the audience — she owns this stage. Other new tracks include the Crimson-esque vibe of *Crossover, X-Faded* with its deceptive intro and the blistering prog funk of *Stay For The Ending*'s title track which the band perform brilliantly.

Promoter Chris Parkins from the London Prog Gigs Facebook group has set another very high bar for next year.

GARY MACKENZIE

"District 97's Leslie Hunt is a charismatic and tenacious frontwoman. She owns this stage."

ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM

VENUE	THE NIGHT OWL, BIRMINGHAM
DATE	20/09/2023

Multi-instrumentalist, singer and producer Rosalie Cunningham might be best known from her Purson days, but she continues to mingle through the hippie age and captivates with her own unique and eclectic blend of baroque'n'roll.

She struts onstage in Birmingham with a retro-looking Gibson SG strapped across her black velvet jumpsuit. Her bandmates equally look like they've been plucked out of a 70s photoshoot, especially guitarist Rosco Wilson with his orange-tinted specs, as they launch into opener *Start With The Corners*. It's a slow burner; there are plenty of shimmering guitar tones to hang on to and a Doors-esque groove-laden jam that spirals into the woozy riffs of *Ride On My Bike*. Its fuzzy tones explode into a space-rock high and a solo fit for an early Queen record, Cunningham's deep yet dreamy vocals and resonating vibrato technique sitting comfortably in early Grace Slick territory.

"I've gotta make an entrance, though, right? And a clumsy one at that – Johnny Depp did this recently, so I guess it's fine for me to do it too," quips Cunningham, as she fixes her mic before diving into the modern-day psychedelic leanings of *Donovan Ellington*, with its folksy charm and all those jangly distorted guitars, wobbly grooves and plenty of luscious musical arrangements. Wilson proves that he can sing as well as strum on the psych-vaudeville/cabaret-styled *Duet* sporadically weaved between notably bouncy rhythms, complex compositions and swirling synths of keyboardist Aaron Bolli-Thompson. It reaches an explosive psychedelic climax with heaps of wah-wah.

Cunningham is wide-eyed as she surveys the crowd. Her honeyed melodies are showcased on *Riddles And Games*: a full-on acid-rock cut from her first solo album that makes a nod to Kate Bush with a mid-section that's packed with psych rock. Bassist Claudia Gonzalez Diaz's bass lines are weighty and she shows off her impeccable skills as a fluatist on Purson cover *Tempest And The Tide*. It's a tip of the hat to Jethro Tull and continues to transport us back to the early 70s, with all its hypnotic twists and turns.

"We've been working on this new project for a little while now – *Rabbit Foot* is the title track and it'll be out some time next year," Cunningham enthuses. The song is a full-throttle 70s boogie that bubbles up in unexpected places and sees Cunningham and Wilson swapping vocal duties. "I hope you've all enjoyed the show tonight as much as we have," Cunningham says, a big smile across her face as she introduces *Chocolate Money*, with its pleasing and uplifting groove. Tonight's performance is nothing less than a cosmic clash of colourful psychedelia and magical mysterious melody.

EMILY MACNEVIN

Take a bow

ARCTANGENT FESTIVAL

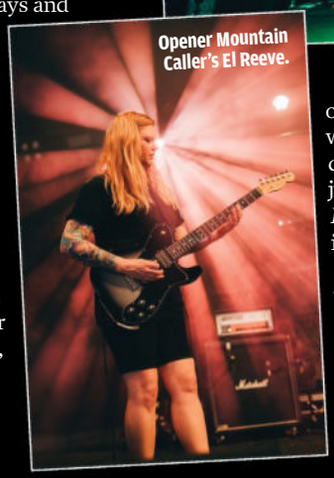
VENUE	FERNHILL FARM, COMPTON MARTIN
DATE	17/08/2023-19/08/2023

Set in the rolling Somerset countryside and spread across three days and five stages, ArcTanGent has established itself as the leading UK live event for math rock, post-rock, progressive metal and more experimental sounds. And although not everything falls under *Prog*'s banner, there's plenty on offer that does. Equally, despite the assumption that festivals such as this and Manchester's Radar pull in a younger demographic, well, you know what they say about assumptions...

First up on Thursday are psychedelic post-rockers **Mountain Caller**, who are currently gearing up for album two and, armed with new single *The Archivist*, they prove just as exciting as they are entrancing.

Despite being darlings of the progressive rock scene since their 2017 breakthrough album *Reflections Of A Floating World*, **Elder** are making their ArcTanGent debut. The good news is that the festival's attendees get caught-up-to-date with a setlist that explores the band's four LPs. *Thousand Hands* proves a majestic and expansive opener, using its 10 minutes to gallop between psychedelic, metal and stoner textures. *Halcyon* is a more atmospheric prog offering and its clean guitar notes echo throughout the packed-out tent. Despite the brief four-song setlist, these Americans justify the hype and then some.

Elder make their ATG debut.



Opener Mountain Caller's El Reeve.

Friday offers a mixed bag of sonic delights, starting with **The Ocean**, whose complex soundscape includes just two tracks from 2023's *Holocene*. They do explore it further later on at a secret silent disco, where the audience wear headphones to hear the set.

After cancelling in 2022, Norwegian prog metallers **Enslaved** have finally found their way to ArcTanGent and make up for the delay with a prog metal stampede. The Norwegian sextet may be heavy and flaunt the snarling vocals of bassist/singer Grutle Kjellson, but *Homebound* and *Kingdom* — with their avant-garde time signatures and swelling keyboards — prove that this is a band with experimental credentials. Although cuts from new album *Heimdal* dominate the set, the marching *Isa* and singalong *Havenless* inject some festival-calibre fun into the show.

Northern Irish instrumental quartet **And So I Watch You From Afar** treat ArcTanGent as a homecoming festival.

The Ocean's Loïc Rossetti brings sonic delights.

Jaga Jazzist: one for fans of Soft Machine.

Devin Townsend: when he says, "Jump" we say, "How high?"

> **"It's not just about the kids: Devin Townsend's set sees a crowd with an average age of 40 jump far higher than they should be able to."**

ARCTANGENT PRESS/AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR: DEVIN TOWNSEND, ENSLAVED, JAGA JAZZIST, PSYCHONAUT: JONATHAN DADDS. ELDER, MOUNTAIN CALLER, THE OCEAN: DEREK BREMNER. VOLA, HAKEN, HEILUNG: JOE SINGH. AIMING FOR ENRIKE: CARL BATTAMS

Regulars And So I Watch You From Afar wow the crowd.

Heilung: intense and wonderful.

Aiming For Enrike: a truly unique sound.

Having appeared at Fernhill Farm a handful of times, they're familiar with the crowd and how well their contrasting shimmering, glossy sections of harmonised guitar work and crashing, distorted climaxes are received here.

While many of the artists at ArcTanGent look to the future of rock and metal, Norwegian collective **Jaga Jazzist** are a refreshing throwback of a jazz option. The collective invoke comparisons to the likes of Soft Machine with their expansive compositions.

Friday's headliners **Heiling** are unlike anything you've witnessed before. Drawing influence from ancient history and folk metal, they perform a ritual with an intense narrative to the sound of thundering drums and war cries in front of a packed-out tent full of festival-goers who have gathered out of intrigue, wonder and amazement. As Heilung's warriors dance around a naked woman given as a staged sacrifice, the soundtrack of layered drum beats is accompanied by clanging bells, rattling bones and deep-throat-singing, which earns the collective the title of the most primally progressive band on this year's varied line-up.

Early on Saturday morning, **Psychonaut** offer the perfect hangover cure with their cavalcade of high-octane riffs. Their inclusion of Floydian prog balances out some of the more metallic excitement, while ambient Norwegian duo **Aiming For Enrike** combine synths with aggressively complex riffs to showcase a truly unique sound.

Psychonaut are the perfect hangover cure.

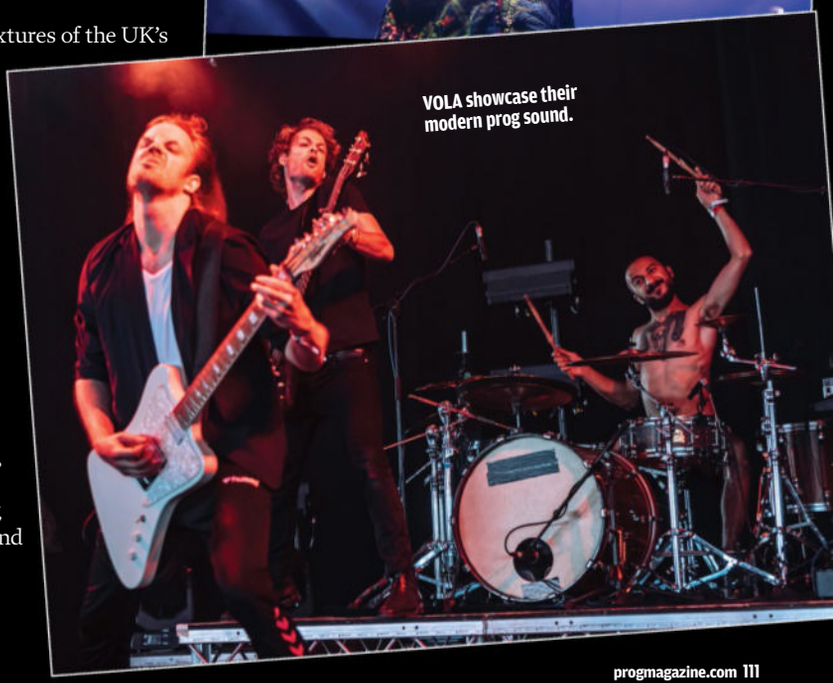
Although we're too familiar with *24 Light-Years* and *Straight Lines* to get too excited about them now, the combination of intricate riffs and beautiful melodic passages in both songs is executed near-flawlessly on the main stage. Danish-Swedish band **VOLA** lean on material from 2021's *Witness* not because their back catalogue is weak, but because *Witness* is a stunning example of modern prog that deserves to be showcased to this crowd of eager fans who lap up each elaborate riff.

Haken have been fixtures of the UK's prog metal scene for a decade now, so the fact that this year marks their ArcTanGent debut feels bonkers. *Taurus*, *Sempiternal Beings* and *Lovebite* represent the experimental sensibility of latest album *Fauna*, while *Prosthetic* and *Invasion* bust out the more direct metal of its predecessor *Virus*. The set peaks, though, with a majestic *Cockroach King* uniting the tent in a massive and justified singalong.

Headliner **Devin Townsend** is almost a household name now, certainly as far as ArcTanGent goes. With a successful career in music spanning 30 years, he's as grounded, hilarious and endearing as ever. It's just as easy to get emotional to the sound of *Spirits Will Collide*'s anthemic chorus when you're standing shoulder-to-shoulder with kindred spirits, as it is to become awestruck at the inclusion of two songs from his previous band, Strapping Young Lad, in the form of *Love?* and *Aftermath*. Another surprise addition is the awesomely chaotic *Bad Devil*, which sees a crowd with an average age of 40 jump far higher than they should be able to. Which shows ArcTanGent isn't just about the kids!

CHERI FAULKNER/MATT MILLS

Haken's Ross Jennings leads the singalong.



VOLA showcase their modern prog sound.

IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO START THINKING ABOUT CHRISTMAS...

SUBSCRIBE TO PROG

& RECEIVE A FREE PAIR OF BOOMPODS HEADPODS PRO†

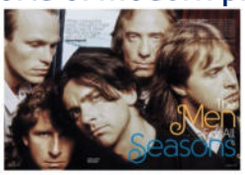
Wireless fully adjustable premium headphones with three equaliser settings.

- ★ **Wirelessly enhance audio with the BOOM button**
- ★ **Over-ear design with PILLOWFOAM™**
- ★ **Foldable and mic with play/ pause controls**
- ★ **12-hour battery, two-hour charge, and universal compatibility**
- ★ **Ready for travel**

WORTH £39.99! RRP

BENEFITS OF SUBSCRIBING

STAY IN THE KNOW with the stories behind classic albums and tours, and all the latest from the world of modern progressive music



FREE delivery direct to your door

SAVE money on shop price

CHOOSE YOUR PACKAGE

PRINT MAGAZINE + FREE GIFT
ONLY £23.49
every 6 months by Direct Debit*

SAVE 41%

DIGITAL MAGAZINE
ONLY £19.99
every 6 months by Direct Debit

SAVE 37%

SUBSCRIBE ONLINE

www.magazinesdirect.com/XG95

OR CALL US

0330 333 1113 and quote **XG95**

(Lines are open Monday-Friday 8:30am-7pm, Saturday 10am-3pm UK Time)

Terms and conditions: Offer closes 29th JANUARY 2024. Direct Debit offer open to new subscribers only. Offer is available to UK subscribers only. *£23.49 (print magazine), £19.99 (digital magazine) by 6-monthly payments via UK Direct Debit. This price is guaranteed for the first 12 months and we will notify you in advance of any price changes. All gift subscriptions will start with the first available issue on-sale after December 2023. If you would like your gift subscription to start with an earlier issue, you can choose an earlier issue when ordering or you can contact customer services. Orders purchased for yourself will start with the next available issue – please allow up to 6 weeks for delivery (up to 8 weeks overseas). The full subscription rate is for 12 months (10 issues) and includes postage and packaging.† Your gift will be delivered separately within 60 days after your first payment has cleared. Gifts only available to subscribers on the UK mainland. Gifts not available with a digital subscription. In the unlikely event that we run out of this gift, we promise to offer you an alternative gift of the same value. Payment is non-refundable after the 14-day cancellation period, unless exceptional circumstances apply. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries, please call +44 (0) 330 333 1113. Lines are open Monday-Friday 8:30am-7pm, Saturday 10am-3pm UK Time (excluding Bank Holidays), or email help@magazinesdirect.com. Calls to 0330 numbers will be charged at no more than a national landline call, and may be included in your phone provider's call bundle.

PRESS/MARTIN REIJMAN

FRANCK CARDUCCI

The great and good of progressive music give us a glimpse into their prog worlds. **As told to Grant Moon.**

Where's home?
I live in Lyon, France.

What's your earliest prog memory?
When I was about 13 my cousin introduced me to *Trespass* by Genesis, and that changed my life. I already knew them because *I Can't Dance* was all over the radio at the time, and the video was very funny.

What's the first prog album that you bought?
Selling England By The Pound in the early 90s. But Pink Floyd's *Wish You Were Here* was already in my dad's vinyl box...

And the last?
I was in the US recently and bought *Hounds Of Love* by Kate Bush on vinyl.

Your first proggy gig?
I attended two Pink Floyd shows in Lyon in September '94. On the second one they played the whole of *The Dark Side Of The Moon* — an unforgettable experience!

And the most recent?
We played A New Day Festival in Kent back in August, and saw the headline show by The Zombies. It's amazing how much those guys can still rock.

The best prog gig you ever saw in your life?
Roger Waters playing *Dark Side* in an outdoor park in the Netherlands, in 2011. It was so good that the real full Moon rose behind the stage during the show. A lot of people were crying at that moment, including me.

Your latest prog discovery?
I recently discovered Solstice. I saw them live and they were amazing. I loved them.

Any guilty musical pleasures?
I love *Grease* (both the movie and the soundtrack), and I also went to see Madonna live a few years back and really enjoyed it. Pleasures like these are probably partly why there's so much glitter, glam and fun in my own shows.

Your specialist subject on *Mastermind*?
I'm a big fan of the Tour de France (I used to cycle a lot but it's just too hard for me now). It would be that or classic Hollywood movies of the 50s to the 70s, which are much less tiring than cycling...

Your favourite prog venue?
The Boerderij. I used to live in the Netherlands and went to so many gigs there. It was there in 2010 that Steve Hackett told me, "You should record an album with your songs." And the rest is history.

Who's your prog hero?
Paul McCartney, because of everything he brought to rock music, including prog. I simply wouldn't be the same me without Paul.

> Watching Floyd play *DSOTM* was an unforgettable experience!

PARAMOUNT PICTURES/FOTOS INTERNATIONAL/GETTY IMAGES

We'd love to see Carducci cover *Greased Lightning*!

WILSON/DAILY HERALD/MIRRORPIX VIA GETTY IMAGES

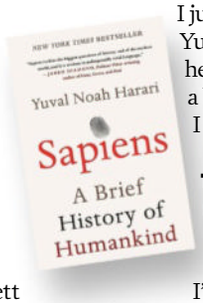
Macca in 1967: heroic!

Outside of music, what do you enjoy doing?
Cooking, especially Italian food. According to my band members I do it quite well.

Ever had a prog-related date?
A few years back I met a gorgeous, die-hard Steven Wilson fan. I then introduced her to my girlfriend, and the rest of the story is told in my song *Beautiful Night*!

The most important piece of prog music is...
Supper's Ready by Genesis. It contains everything that defines the genre: Mellotron, 12-strings, weird time signatures, an epic finale, mythological references, complex imagery, and humour.

What are you reading at the moment?



I just finished *Sapiens* by Yuval Noah Harari. It's heavy but so, so good — a bit like a good prog song, I suppose.

The prog musician you'd most like to work with?
I'd love to collaborate with Peter Gabriel, although I'm not sure he considers himself a 'prog musician'...

Which proggy album gets you in a good mood?
Any classic album by Supertramp really, like *Crime Of The Century* or *Crisis, What Crisis?*

Your favourite prog album cover?
It's the cover of my favourite album: *Animals* by Pink Floyd. It's framed on my kitchen wall.

And what are you up to at the moment?
I toured the UK for a week in August and I've already booked the next one there — two weeks next March. Meanwhile, I'm trying to record some new tracks!

See www.franckcarducci.com for more information.

The Rock Artist's Progress, music written and performed by Darryl Way, legendary violinist and composer with Curved Air.

Set at the tail end of the 1960's, Magenta Aura were a little-known psychedelic rock band hoping to claw their way out of the "Summer of Love" counter-culture and on to more mainstream success - and they almost got it too. However an unforgiving music business had other plans...

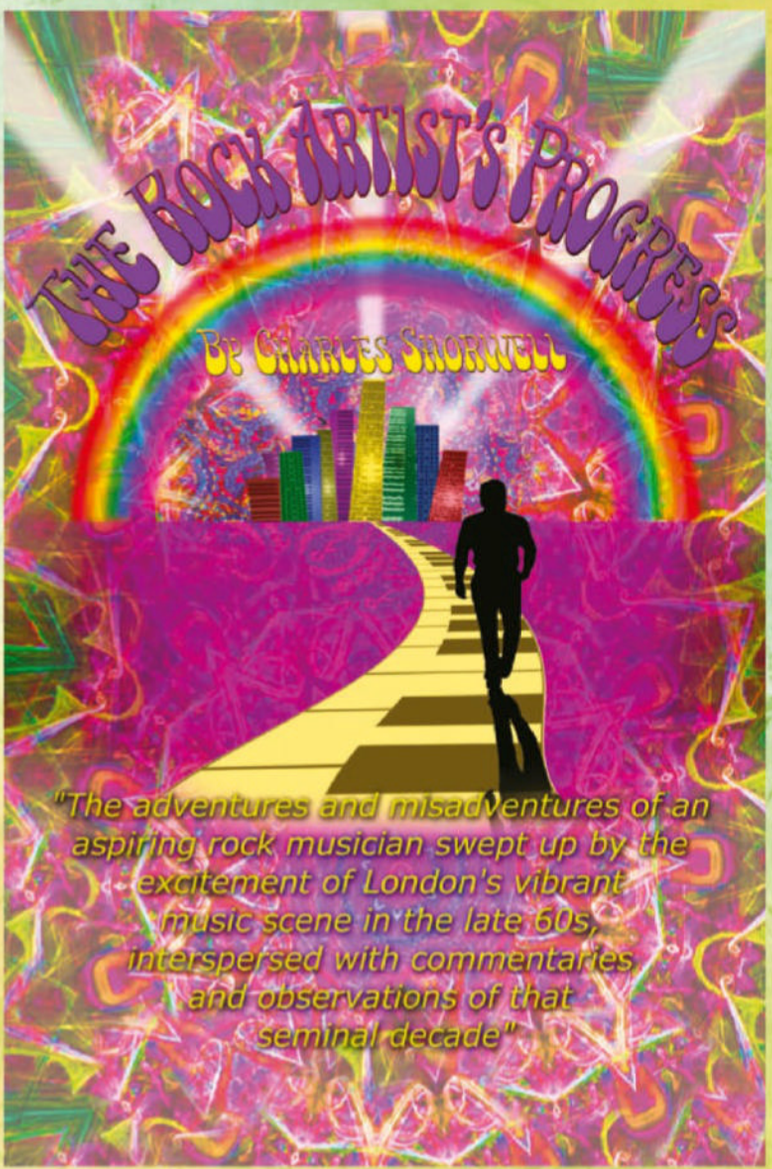
Charles Shorwell's fantastic novel charts the perilous and pitfall ridden journey to success, which so many rock musicians will recognise.

Now for the first time, the novel and accompanying album are available together.

Read the cautionary tale of Magenta Aura whilst listening to the album inspired by their story, composed and performed by Darryl Way. Features the single Morpheus with Steve Hogarth of Marillion.

The Rock Artist's Progress
Novel and CD bundle **£24.00**
Available from Burning Shed

www.burningshed.com



SPIRIT of UNICORN MUSIC

CHERRY RED RECORDS

Discipline Global Mobile and Panegyric Proudly Present

New Autumn 2023 releases

Larks' Tongues In Aspic: 50th anniversary edition of King Crimson's classic 1973 album on 2CD/2Blu-ray set and a 2LP set (200-gram audiophile vinyl).

2CD/2Blu-ray set (KCXP5015)

Blu-Ray Disc 1 features all-new 2023 mixes in Dolby Atmos, DTS-HD MA 5.1 Surround Sound and Hi-Res Stereo by Steven Wilson and new Elemental Mixes in Hi-Res Stereo by David Singleton.

Blu-Ray disc 2 contains the complete recordings of every session recorded for the album. All material newly mixed from the original performances and presented on disc for the first time in Hi-Res 24/96 stereo. Plus Hi-Res stereo mixes of the original stereo masters & David Singleton's audio documentary of the album recording "Keep That One, Nick".

CD1 includes the 2023 stereo mix and instrumentals of the album and CD2 includes the elemental mixes and selected master reels.

2LP set (KCLPX2023)

Pressed on 200-gram Super Heavyweight vinyl with LP1 featuring all new 2023 stereo mixes by Steven Wilson and LP2 featuring all new 2023 elemental mixes by David Singleton.

McDonald And Giles (DGMLP7)

The first official vinyl release of McDonald And Giles in decades and cut from a transfer of the original masters for the first time since 1970. Pressed on 200gram Super-Heavyweight vinyl.

Music Is Our Friend (KCLPBX504)

Limited edition 3LP set on 200gram Super-Heavyweight vinyl King Crimson's final US concert in Washington, DC (Sept 2021) and 4 additional tracks from Albany, New York (August 2021) available on vinyl for the first time.

PANEGYRIC

www.dgmlive.com
www.burningshed.com

9001

9000